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Gobind Behari Lal

A JOURNALIST FROM INDIA, AT HOME IN THE WORLD

With an Introduction by  
William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

An Interview Conducted by  
Suzanne B. Riess  
in 1981

Underwritten by  
The Hearst Foundation

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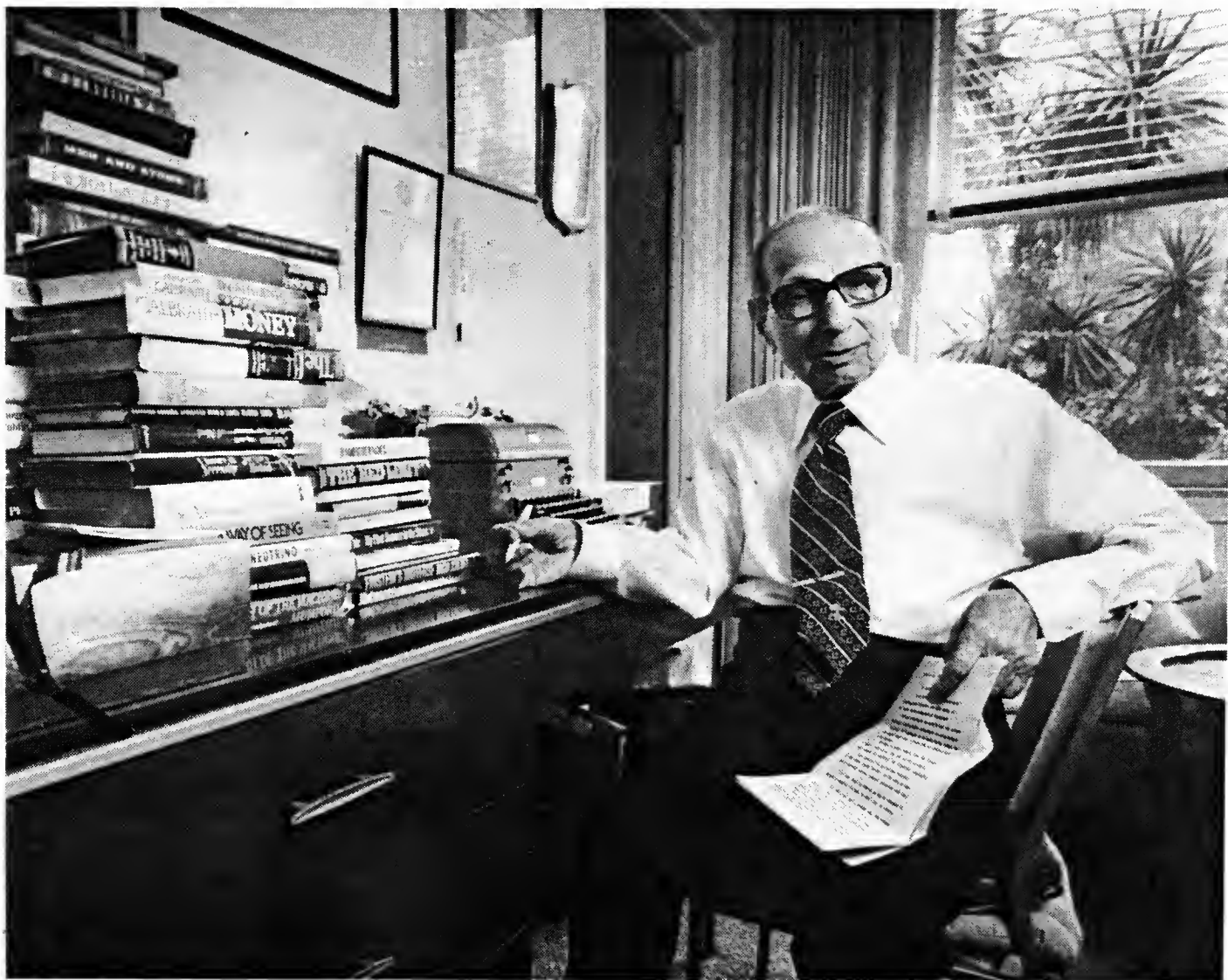
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Journalist Gobind Behari Lal, at home, 1980

*Examiner Photo by Paul Glines*







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## INTRODUCTION

Gobind Behari Lal. It's not a run-of-the-mill name. Whether spoken or printed, it's a name that gets attention.

In the printed form it has had tremendous exposure. Over the last six decades it has appeared as a by-line on thousands of stories in hundreds of millions of copies of Hearst newspapers and supplements.

In person, too, Gobind Behari Lal commands attention. Not because he is typical of the loud talking, heavy drinking macho male that Hecht and MacArthur created as the--not too accurate--stereotype of a newspaperman in their great novel, The Front Page.

Lal gets attention because he is the antithesis of the accepted mold.

Five feet in height, Lal has been called a diminutive giant. In a half century of friendship and working relations, I have never heard Lal raise his voice. He has never smoked and the occasion is rare--and very special--when he will take so much as a glass of wine.

Lal looks, dresses, talks and acts like a gentleman. And is. He is almost courtly in his manner of dealing with others.

However, none should be fooled by Lal's kindly demeanor. In the pursuit of a story, he is tenacious and thorough. When on assignment, he is totally committed to getting the facts.

During his long career with the Hearst organization, Lal has "gotten the facts" on some of the most important science stories of all time.

Even today--although he has soared past the 90-year mark--he continues to pound out a steady flow of reports on the latest developments in research institutions throughout the world.

I met Lal in the late 1920s, shortly after I went to work for Pop's morning newspaper in New York City, the American. However, my grandmother was the first member of our family to meet this soft-spoken, self-assured man of science. That was in 1913 or 1914.

During her long tenure as a Regent of the University of California, Phoebe Apperson Hearst tended to make the Berkeley Campus her second home. She was always working on some project--and providing her personal funds--to improve the quality of education and of life for the thousands of students at the beautiful campus, just across the Bay from San Francisco.



Gobind Behari Lal had come to California from his native India in 1912. Shortly thereafter, he enrolled at Berkeley. In addition to giving attention to his studies, Lal also devoted a lot of time to crusading for the independence of his native land.

In fact, for a short time after his arrival in this country, Lal published a small newspaper committed to his cause.

With these extra-curricular activities, it was inevitable that Lal would come to the attention of Dr. Benjamin Wheeler, President of the University.

Apparently Wheeler was intrigued with the quiet and courtly young student who spent his spare time firing printed broadsides demanding that the British give India its freedom.

In 1914, Lal stepped up his activities when the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand sparked the powder-keg of Europe and The Great War exploded on the world stage. Lal immediately launched a new campaign to keep the United States out of Europe's wars.

Lal's position was one that had many followers as well as many opponents. The subject--pro and con--was widely debated on the campus and elsewhere.

During those years, my grandmother frequently invited students and faculty members for weekends at her home in Pleasanton, about thirty miles east of Berkeley. These gatherings often developed into round-table discussions on a wide range of subjects.

President Wheeler felt young Lal--with his strong views on international matters--might provide some yeast for her holidays at Pleasanton. He introduced the gentle firebrand to my grandmother and over the next two or three years, Lal was occasionally invited to the Hacienda.

However, Lal did not join the Hearst newspapers under the sponsorship of my grandmother. He was independent minded for himself as well as for his native land and never broached--to Phoebe--the possibility of working for her son's newspaper.

Instead, when he left the University, Lal travelled in Europe for a year or two before returning to San Francisco. Shortly after returning to the states, Lal worked as a reporter for the Daily News, one of San Francisco's evening newspapers.

It was not until 1925 that Lal--with only his Daily News track record to recommend him--sought out Edmund Coblentz, Editor of the San Francisco Examiner, and applied for a position with Pop's first newspaper.

Cobbie put Lal on general assignment which meant that he worked under the City Editor covering breaking stories on a wide variety of happenings throughout the Bay Area.



Lal might have stayed on general assignment for evermore had not one of his stories been on an important scientific development that would have far-reaching impact.

Pop, who was always keen about science, medicine, invention and discovery, spotted the story. He liked the way Lal had turned the obtuse and complicated language of the laboratory into terms the average reader could understand.

He--Pop--who was then operating out of New York, did some checking on Lal's talents and general ability and--when they proved satisfactory--directed that Lal be assigned to the scientific beat.

This literally meant the creation of a new post. In the 1920s--in fact, until the relatively recent past--few if any newspapers boasted a science editor.

Obviously, Lal was in the right place at the right time. And his science report caught the attention of the right man.

History proves that science was on the launching pad in the 1920s. New ideas, new products, new inventions and new formulae poured from laboratories and research institutions over the next fifty years.

In the 1920s, radio was moving out of its swaddling clothes and spawning new ideas in electronic research. Television had made its flickering beginnings in laboratories in San Francisco and the east coast.

Aviation won new stature in World War I and was now moving out of the county fair barnstorming syndrome. Some Buck Rogers types of those early days were seriously talking about exploring outer space.

Albert Einstein was catapulted into national prominence with his theories on relativity and colleges were expanding their science classes to accomodate a burgeoning crop of future geniuses.

Physicists and bio-chemists were working overtime trying to track down the building blocks of life while others were poking and probing at atoms and neutrons and the kind of medical magic that has come to fruition in the years immediately before and after World War II.

While Pop did not invent Lal, he certainly gave him a long leash and a massive canvas for his stories. And Lal was not found wanting.

Gobind quietly and effectively--and persistently--tracked down the world's most noted scientists and obtained their first hand, first person reports on their theories and discoveries.

There were interviews with Einstein, Fermi, Lawrence, Planck, Millikan, Rutherford, Bush, Carver, Curie, Bohr, Fleming, Hahn, Huxley, Shockley and dozens more.



Sixteen scientists who were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize were interviewed by Lal during his long career.

He made his mark and the world of science took note. And paid him high honors.

In 1937, Lal was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for scientific reporting. In 1946, he was honored with the George Westinghouse Award of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Ten years later, in 1956, Lal was named a Guggenheim Fellow in recognition of his long, productive and effective work in covering and reporting the world of science.

Then, 1958, one of his most cherished honors. The American Medical Association presented Lal its coveted Citation for Distinguished Service.

Down through the years there were other awards and other honors. All were meaningful to him. They still are. In his words, though, "my greatest pleasure continues to be, seeing Gobind Behari Lal as the by-line on a story that helps readers know more about themselves and more about this wonderful and exciting space ship we call home."

It is that kind of chemistry that keeps Lal going forward at 90 plus.

William Randolph Hearst, Jr.

29 March 1982  
New York, New York



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Gobind Behari Lal was suggested to the Regional Oral History Office as an interviewee in the fall of 1979. Pulitzer Prize winner, Republic of India gold medalist, science editor emeritus for the Hearst papers since 1954, Lal was still, in 1979 and on into 1980, providing the San Francisco Examiner with pithy feature pieces on his favorite themes. He was an extraordinary man and a rare informant for the history of journalism in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Oral History Office contacted Dr. Lal in his ninetieth year, in November, and proposed an oral interview to begin at the beginning and go to the end, a complete biography. Gobind Behari Lal had a great loyalty to the University of California where he was a post-graduate research fellow in social sciences from 1912 to 1917. Upon being asked to be an interviewee he responded cordially, referring to "...nostalgic affection for the University of California where I hung my youthful hat."

Preparing for his oral history, Lal started to outline his memories, saying, "I owe my professional work, my survival in the United States, to William Randolph Hearst and his family. It was through my loyal and continued work in the Hearst Press System that I got myself Americanized in the national sense. In this age of Nationalism, my nationalism is two-layer: Indian and American. I am a double patriot, with no if or but."

The outline sketched lightly his interests. One theme was Science for People. This simple-sounding concept encompassed a world when one realized that for Lal science included everything. Albert Einstein, whom Lal interpreted to a generation of newspaper readers, said, "the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and oldest mainspring of scientific research." Lal agreed. This philosophy of science as a salvation for mankind, and of "earth patriotism" as a sane alternative to the both aggressive and defensive energies of nationalism, came from a man who thrived on the existence of beauty and romance as well as freedom and revolution. This was a man around whom big concepts whirled. An Indian intellectual.

Newsman emeritus for twenty-five years, Lal still went regularly to his Examiner office to write. Younger reporters who came to know this unusual member of their profession were fascinated. Here was a newspaperman with such beliefs and such brilliance, such a fine understanding of complex things, and yet a humanistic frame of reference. One friend, Hal Silverman, California Living Magazine editor, recalled walking along with Lal as the latter quoted Kipling. But Lal was not a guru or an eccentric, and Silverman admired Lal's professionalism and determination in dealing with subjects like physics, cancer, V.D.



An article about Lal written at the time of his ninetieth birthday celebrated his fifty-five years in the newspaper business, beginning as an art critic, book reviewer, economics writer [October 7, 1979]. In 1930 he had become science editor, and wrote seven columns a week for twelve years before moving to New York to edit the American Weekly. The need to express thought in writing was perpetual. The articles from late in his life, the Sunday think pieces, were for Lal an important synthesis of all his major concerns.

Having agreed to the oral history, Lal proposed a meeting at the San Francisco Press Club, a busy, noisy place to have lunch. Despite three-quarters of a century in this country, Lal's Indian accent made perfect understanding a challenge. (His deafness was a problem too.) At that lunch I caught scattered references to Gandhi, Nehru, Einstein, and revolutions amidst a din of Christmas music, conversations, and crockery. All most intriguing, but I knew that I would have to take detailed notes for the transcriber because what I was comprehending looking at my subject would be impossible to understand in listening to the tape.

The interviews took place on June 2, July 16, September 4, and December 3, 1981 in Lal's apartment. The phrase book-lined would not suggest correctly the sense of books in that place. Books were in piles, still in jackets, though definitely read, stacked up from the floor to a barely safe height. Bookcases were topped with books in stacks. There were hundreds of books, at least half the visible ones recent writings in science and history and psychology and modern thought. Underlined, noted, they were grist for his mill. A more restrained glass-fronted bookcase housed the autographed Mencken and other precious volumes.

The walls were hung with art and awards and signs of the duality and the personal life of an Indian man. Lal offered arrangements of cushions to make me feel perfectly comfortable. That was most important to him. The apartment was heated, always too warm for me. I drank refreshing drinks of water made cloudy by the addition of coriander, cold and delicious, and nibbled on little snacks of salty lentils and tidbits. It was an atmosphere conducive to leaning back into those cushions and just enjoying the talk of such a definitely exceptional person.

I am extending the personal remarks because I imagine that Lal's response to me had a lot of the generous qualities that he showed everyone he met who interested him. He always suggested dinner. One evening we did go out, to the St. Francis's dark panelled dining room, which looked remarkably like British India. He was an "eat, eat" sort of meal companion, yet he ate little. I wished to insist that he please "eat, eat."

In the same spirit of graciousness, correctness, and enthusiasm for the new friend, he would insist on walking me to my car, which invariably was several long blocks away, at Sutter and Stockton, from his Mason Street apartment. He was small and bent, in his ninety-first year, and we were an



unusual couple, proceeding slowly through the five o'clock foot traffic on Sutter Street. I wanted to turn around and walk him safely back to his apartment.

The afternoon of his Press Club speech [August 4, 1981], recollecting his Hearst newspaper days and science writings, we adjourned to an evening with the assembled Press Club and invited guests and Mary Martin of KQED's "Over Easy" television program. Miss Martin and Lal were introduced and he recalled with great gallantry her opening in New York in South Pacific.

Ultimately the oral history-gathering became a less than complete autobiography, because of Lal's failing health, and because of his idea of what the University of California should wish to hear. Our feeling too was that in interviewing a writer, there was no need to have that person's thoughts articulated once again on themes already carefully expressed in writing. The hope in the oral history was rather to find out what had led Lal to an interest in one issue rather than another.

In late January, 1982, the history was sent to Lal for his editing, but he was by that time caught between needing to travel and needing to husband his failing strength. The end was near when a letter came on February 26, 1982. "I have been possessed by some sort of illness. Pragmatically, it has been a work-interrupting nuisance, and has pulled me down. I have started reading what you have sent, and shall make corrections as to names, etc., but shall do nothing to change the basic style. I agree with you about the value of oral spontaneity. I'll telephone you next week. Meanwhile my love, Ever Gobind." He died on April 1, 1982. The oral history was corrected through the first ten pages only.

After Lal's death, the executors, his old friends the John Wynne Herrons, began removing his effects from the apartment. Phyllis Herron read the oral history of her friend and informed us that major censoring of his life had been done by Lal, who did not discuss a personal attachment that was, she knew, very important to him. Earlier another revelation had come from Elliot E. Porter of Berkeley. Researching the 1917-1918 Hindu Conspiracy Trial, Mr. Porter had been refused a meeting with Lal. When he learned from University Archivist J.R.K. Kantor that ROHO had conducted an interview, he shared his information on Lal's role in the case. Lal died before a proposed joint meeting could be held. For this reason, the historical note from Porter is included.

These secret aspects of his life make understandable Lal's initial caveat: in agreeing to the oral history, he said [December 12, 1980], "If our meeting comes off next year, the responsibility of saying or withholding will be solely mine, to be exercised as sincerely as possible." However, with a sense of curiosity--and loss--we asked Raj and Beth Bhatnagar, part of Gobind Lal's "family," to read the transcript and make extended additions where appropriate. They were able to make only minor corrections. Like Mrs. Herron, they realized that their close friend's life was compartmentalized



and that the compartments were completely separate.

The executor's task, for months after Lal's death, was to empty that apartment. The bureau drawers were full of papers and books and journals and notes. There were boxes of manuscript and years of notebooks, beginnings of articles, tear sheets for decades, writings on India. All of this, still being sorted out, will probably come, along with the library and the personal papers, letters and diaries and so on, to The Bancroft Library and the Department of Journalism at the University of California. Those associated with Lal have concluded that he expected eventually all of his life would be open.

Being involved with Gobind—as he wished to be addressed—through his oral history, and now as an observer of the aftermath of his life, has been as fascinating as doing oral history can be. His range was as big as the world, and he was recognized and rewarded for the publicly known parts of his life. The harder aspects of those years had to be kept private, but certainly they made him the sympathetic human being that he was.

The introduction to Dr. Lal by William Randolph Hearst, Jr., does honor to the "gentle firebrand" and "persistent reporter." Our thanks to Mr. Hearst for his finely-worded summing up of Lal's professional career and for his sensitivity in arranging to have those words read to Lal by Charles L. Gould at a bedside visit before Lal died. Just a few days earlier, coincidentally, Lal himself had put his thoughts down in a letter saluting the Hearsts and America in a fervent tribute. Lal's recognition of Patriotism and Renaissance virtues was an affirmation of what he felt was important. Surely he saw that he admired and sought in people qualities that were most completely his.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California history. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, division head, and under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Suzanne B. Riess  
Senior Editor-Interviewer

25 May 1983  
Regional Oral History Office  
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## I INDIA AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

[Interview 1: June 2, 1981]##

Family Life

G.B. Lal: I was born on October 9th, 1889, in the City of Delhi. An extension of it is now called New Delhi, which is the capital of India. I belong to an old Hindu family, called Hindus or Indians, historically, the people across Sindhu or Indus. My parents, on both sides, were "Orthodox Hindus," in the narrow religious sense of Brahmanism and Dharma.

We were seven children: three sisters and four brothers, and I'm the youngest, and the least important of the four sons of my parents.

Riess: You mean, traditionally the youngest is the least important?

G.B. Lal: Oh, nobody paid attention to me, I was an extra affair anyway. [laughs]

My three elder brothers were very dear to me. One of them, Bara Dada exercised a profound influence on me. He was a great painter, and a versatile artist. Also a great social reformer. He was essentially an artist. If you want to know his name, I'll be happy to give it. His name was Brij Mohan Lal. His profound influence on me will come up later on. But every brother was nice to me.

And I had two elder sisters and a younger sister. So--the sisters were all married, and all marriages in our old ways were arranged marriages, parents arranged them. So their lives belonged to their husbands' families.

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##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 133.



G.B. Lal: My father was a high official in a Rajasthan state. Are you familiar with Rajasthan?

Riess: I know where it is.

G.B. Lal: I'll tell you what was important. There are a number of what the British used to call Native States or Princely States. These were states of different rank and power, some of them very big, like Mysore or Hyderabad. The government of every one of these states was a hereditary kingship. These kings were called maharajas or nabobs. They were the rulers by right of heredity.

But they had accepted the supremacy of the British government. And in various degrees, the British exercised supremacy over various states, according to their size and power. So the states were really autonomous, as far as internal affairs were concerned. Only in foreign affairs they were under the British, they did what the British want[ed] them to. They were like Saxony, and other states in the German Empire under the Kaiser.

My father was a kind of governor, an administrator or, as the French say, a prefect, in the state called Bikaner, and the Maharaja was a very important man to him. The Maharaja was Ganga Singh--at the time I'm talking about. Later he was given all kinds of titles by the British Government. Now, my first ten years of life, I would say, from 1889 until the death of Queen Victoria and a little later--she died in 1900 or so, I forgot--was kind of half-and-half spent in Delhi where I was born, the childhood I'm talking about, and then in Bikaner with my father. The arrangement was that, my mother used to stay in Delhi; she preferred to be in Delhi in order to get my elder brothers educated in a college. When their college work was finished, my mother and my eldest brother took me to Bikaner and we began to live with my father. So I spent four or five years in the Bikaner State.

Now the one memory that I think is amusing, certainly not forgot easily, was when the Maharaja visited the town which was the headquarters of my father. Father was Nazim, both the executive and the judicial official, of the province, "nazimat." At that time, I might have been four or five years old, I can't be sure.

Riess: But you remember this visit?

G.B. Lal: Oh, I remember it very vividly. Not only that, but the Maharaja asked my father to present me to him. They held a kind of royal court levee; the rajput barons closely or more remotely related to the ruler, come to pay homage to the Maharaja. My father presented each of them in a strict order.



G.B. Lal: And after they had been presented and had made their homages, I was brought forward. I said something to His Majesty, I forget what, but he was pleased and he gave me the first gift I ever received in my life, which was twenty-five rupees. That was a lot of money in those days; it's like twenty-five dollars for an American boy in those days. That pleased my mother immensely. I didn't know what the value of the money was, but I have not forgotten that.

Riess: And had you been singled out as a courtesy to your father?

G.B. Lal: Well, I was the youngest child. The Maharaja, as he came riding on his horse, had caught sight of me hiding in my father's tent, and asked that I be presented to him at the levee in the evening. My older brother was busy with preparations for the reception of the Maharaja. He was an artist, he prepared the whole town for the reception in all kinds of ways. But I just peeped at the ruler galloping on his horse from my father's tent.

Riess: Did your father respect the Maharaja?

G.B. Lal: Pardon?

Riess: Did everyone automatically respect and honor the Maharaja?

G.B. Lal: Father was in the service of the Maharaja. The Maharaja was the ruler, and my father was one of his provincial governors.

Riess: I just wondered whether there were good Maharajas and bad Maharajas.

G.B. Lal: That we'll come to later. He became one of the most famous of the British feudal system. But about that, wait 'til I come there. If you are interested in that part, I've plenty a little later.

But let me first say that my mother and my father and brothers decided not to send me to the local school, because it was not good enough for me. They just tried to get me to learn at home, and they became my tutors.

My artist brother was the one who taught me English and related things he thought would be useful to me in my college work later on. My father was a very great scholar of Indian languages, and he not only taught me our own language, Urdu and Hindi, as they call them, but he used to read to me in Hindi the great Indian classics, like the Mahabharata, and the Ramayana. I could not read them, but I would in the evenings sit down with him and listen to his recital. He filled me with all the heroic things like reading Homer to Greek boys. That was very important to me. Of course I didn't realize it at the time.



G.B. Lal: Also, my father performed havan, they call it, a sacred rite of fire every evening. That was an ancient Aryan rite of thousands of years ago. They light the fire, and put some sandalwood and incense and all that, and they repeat the Rig Vedic verses. One of them was very famous: [recites in Sanskrit and translates into English]

Oh God, over man,  
lead me out of darkness into light,  
out of mortality into immortality.

He was very much interested also in medicine, and was a great scholar of so-called Arabic medicine and the old Sanskrit medicine. He had books on it.

He also was a great historical admirer of Emperor Akbar and read all his books. Emperor Akbar was a very famous man, seventeenth century, contemporary with Queen Elizabeth the First. My father read in all history in order to be able to administer the state better.

He not only read medical books, but he treated the villagers free, he made some medicine for them, for fighting diarrhea, and fighting attacks of malaria. And he would go and distribute the medicine so any peasant could come and take home.

He was a man of considerable importance. He could send people to jail for several years in certain offenses. This was a Hindu state, and two animals were never allowed to be killed by anyone, or they would prosecute them, the cow and the peacock.

Riess: I didn't know about the peacock.

G.B. Lal: The peacock, we had so many wild peacocks there, who were always flying from tree to tree around the house, and they would come down—I'd throw them some grain on the roof and they'll come on down and leave their feathers, which I'd collect. A very idyllic life, old fashion.

We lived in a kind of fort; we had the soldiers to guard us. And we had animals, a camel, some dogs, a tortoise, and we had a horse. My brother gave me to read an Urdu translation of the famous American classic, what's the story of the horse?

Riess: Black Beauty?

G.B. Lal: Was it Black Beauty? Yes, that's a children's classic, and it's a very interesting story of the horse. What I did was, I would take this book and go down to the stable and read the story to my horse.



G.B. Lal: [laughs] He munched his grass, and I sat and read it to him. The stable attendant just looked at me, "Hah, hah, hah!" And the horse went on munching his fodder.

Riess: When I looked at a map and located Bikaner, it looks like it was in the desert.

G.B. Lal: This is the deal: Bikaner had sand dunes very much like Arizona, some parts of it. It was very hot there during summer, so we had to have artificial cooling. Sometimes they would have a rain, and then the whole thing would transform into a magic carpet, because the sand dunes—that I used to walk on down hill, climb up the hills and slide down, it's a lot of fun—they were covered with the water-melons and gourds and beautiful yellow flowers and leaves. It was fantastic. Also there was a faun, with little antlers, antelope. Drove of them would run. One of my unforgettable memories—I hope it's not a hallucination, it could be—is of one sunset evening, the crimson sun going down, and these younger antelopes running in a whole row, and I still can see them moving like beautiful music. One of the young antelopes was among our animal pets. They put brass bells around it, and covered it, and one of the soldiers took care of it.

It was that kind of thing, exclusive. They also had some really bad snakes there, and we always would be warned against the snake, like the rattlers, I don't know what kind they were. And terrible scorpions. One day I got bitten by a scorpion, I think it was the left leg which was swollen—I might have died.

What happened was that, barefoot at night, I wanted to leave the bedroom where I slept with my older brother and wanted to go to my mother. I crossed without putting [on] my shoes, I just walked out, and we had a little garden, and as I walked across the garden my foot began to burn and I yelled; and of course they all came and they found the scorpion, they killed it.

It's a terrible thing, oh, I suffered all night, and my brother kept cheering me and telling me, "Well now, you ought to be as brave as Lunadas." (He had told me a story of the Lunadas, the Greek boy.) I said, "I'm not a Lunadas!" That I remember, "I'm hurting!" My brother brought me up—before I could read one word of English—on Shakespeare's stories. I still remember him reading out to me before going to bed, The Comedy of Errors of Shakespeare. And how I rolled and laughed with Dromio and the twin sisters, and the twin brothers mixing up themselves! I still remember, and I was hardly six years old.



G.B. Lal: He encouraged me to read myself. What he would do is he'd say, "Oh, here's your book; you read it and you come and take the lesson from me. But you will have to come and take the lesson." If I missed it for a whole week then he would say, "Where have you been?" And that was enough punishment.

Nobody ever in my life touched me physically. I never received any corporal punishment.

Riess: Is that in Hindu teachings?

G.B. Lal: No Hindu about it, it was just in our family. It happened to me; I can't talk of anybody else, nobody made a survey of that.

Riess: It's not a sort of pacifism.

G.B. Lal: No, no, nothing to say this is the way. I think they liked children. I never, never had a rude word, never had my ears pulled, never knew what a slap was like, never. Nobody did that. Not my mother, father, elder brother, anybody.

Sometimes I'd go down to my father's court and see him try cases. It's very important for me to mention all that, because I was brought up in an atmosphere of politics from childhood, this is what I'm trying to say. My future interest in public life I'm quite sure began with this experience.

Riess: May I ask you a few more questions? I think you're going to move so fast, and it's so interesting. Was this a frontier area? Was it considered to be a frontier?

G.B. Lal: No, this is Bikaner, right in the center.

Riess: I know, but when you said it was like a fort and with soldiers, I wondered.

G.B. Lal: There was a fort, with a military fortress and guns and everything; this was my father's headquarters, officially. This is apart from my house, or home. We had a guarded house, too, with walls and all the soldiers guarding it.

Riess: But was that unusual, to live in such an atmosphere?

G.B. Lal: No, I'm quite sure that in all states people of that rank had the same kind of arrangements, no doubt about it.

Well, now I've come to the other side, my mother's side. On my mother's side I had a background. Hers was a very important state called Patiala. The Maharaja there was a Sikh, you know, the



G.B. Lal: people whom you see in these turbans? He was a very powerful Sikh Maharaja. My mother's uncle was prime minister there, and her brother was one of the three justices of the chief court of Patiala.

I was brought up in two states, would go from one to the other. The statism was a natural atmosphere I soaked in even as a child. And it was pretty feudal and royal, but there it was.

This was the childhood. Some of my older brothers left their textbooks for me. With the help of my eldest brother, who did painting, and made pictures for the Maharaja, I was able to finish a textbook of algebra, maybe a textbook of Euclid before I was eight or nine years old.

Then, instead of teaching the ordinary, primary primers of English which were prescribed in the low grade in school there, if I'd gone to that, my brother taught me the books that he liked. Apart from that core, c-a-t- cat and d-o-g- dog business, as soon as I got over that a little, he would let me read a page of Samuel Smiles' books, Duty, and Character, and Thrift. Really British books.

But more than that, he was interested in science himself, and he was a great admirer of the books of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, and Huxley, they were among his favorites. And I was a kind of librarian for him; I couldn't understand those books, but I knew where the book was, and he asked me to get them.

He got primers, published by the Royal Society in England, on physics, and chemistry, and on logic by Jevens, little primers. Those were all wonderful books, very simply written, and those were my readers.

Then he also had for me a special big colored picture book--published, I think, in Germany--of the great people in history. So there I saw Alexander the Great, and also Jenner, the discoverer of vaccination, and Socrates and Plato, John Stuart Mill, everybody who was anything in Europe, you have a picture of them, a poster picture.

When I wouldn't do my lesson, my brother would say, "Well, how are you going to be a great man?" That was the punishment I received, "Now, you can't be one of the great men if you don't do your lessons." I used to wonder which one of them I prefer. There was Napoleon Bonaparte there, all of those people were in there--I still remember Alexander the Great. It was always curious to me to figure out whether I wanted to be a maharaja or a lord or one of these people.

Riess: But how wonderful to be brought up thinking that all the possibilities were yours.



G.B. Lal: Yes, and then my play too was like that. They gave me a prism, and I tried to get the rays of light split up.

One day I made a little experiment, and shouted myself hoarse with glee. I was very young, about eight years old, something like that, when I made invisible ink. I went to my kitchen and got from mother some wheat dough and then tied it up in a piece of cloth and put it in cold water and got the starch out. This starch was my ink, which is invisible naturally. But I also knew that it will react to iodine; iodine of course we have it.

So I wrote something on the paper with this water and showed it to everybody. "Can you read it, can you read it?" No. Nobody can read it. Then I took some of this iodine, diluted, with a little plug of cotton or something, and tested it, and it came out blue. I was excited; I felt, "That's something!"

Riess: It's all wonderful.

G.B. Lal: What I [then] did was, I took this gluten, the non-starch part of wheat, and I insisted to my mother she'll make a dish for me, of the gluten, cook something for me. I don't know how it tasted, but that's protein, so it's good.

Riess: So you made your mother into a chemist also?

G.B. Lal: She would do anything for me.

Riess: She would, eh? You were unimportant, but you were the most important.

G.B. Lal: [chuckles] I was spoiled. I never was punished.

I wrote an essay that proved that there are no ghosts, I still remember the story.

The story was that there was a swami, and he had a pupil--you know these wandering mendicants, the yogi--and the pupil was afraid of ghosts. The master asked him, where did he see a ghost? He said, "Well, I go out in the evening, and I meet the ghosts in such a place."

"Oh, you do? All right. Then," he said, "you take a red dye, and next time the ghost comes you put it right down his chest, it serves him right."

So this is what he did, and he came back and said, "Yes, I did that to the ghost."

He said, "You did? You put the red dye on the ghost?"

"Yes, yes."



G.B. Lal: He said, "Look at your own chest." Well, he had it on himself. He said, "You silly man, you are the ghost."

So this is what I wrote, and I said, therefore, there are no ghosts. And my father read it, "It's all right." So that's the way we go in a silly way.

And then all of a sudden one day I became a vegetarian, and my father didn't like it at first.

Riess: How did that happen? The rest of your family?

G.B. Lal: We had a mixed diet, but no beef. Beef is the only thing that's not allowed. Otherwise, we had chicken and goat and all kinds. And I loved the meat dishes very much, because my mother prepared really very good food, Indian style of course.

But one day, one of my father's soldiers took me out for a walk, and he had a gun and he said, "Let's go do some shooting." I didn't know what he was going to shoot. We saw some partridges, and he pointed the gun and shot the partridges, and the partridges fell, and he had a hunting dog with him, and the dog picked up the partridge, and he used a knife to finish off the bird.

When I came back home--it's the first time I'd seen this thing happen--I said, "Mother, I never want to eat any more meat." And that was the end. So I was vegetarian until I came to this country. I never touched any meat afterward. It was not good for my health, but I grew up with that or nothing. They didn't bother about it. They said, "You don't want it, we've got plenty of other things, don't eat it."

Riess: They didn't try to influence you.

G.B. Lal: My father once said, "You're a fool. You shouldn't do that kind of thing." My mother said, "There's plenty of food here, let him eat." There was milk, and curry and other things. I am not recommending vegetarianism to anybody, but in my case this is what happened.

But the whole thing was, there was a great deal of John Dewey-ism there; just leave you to develop your own way, but put you in some useful line. They answered all questions, that was part of the philosophy, but never punished me, never called me a bad boy. [They would] correct my errors, if they knew what they were--and often I wouldn't tell them [chuckles]--but that developed in me a great deal of individualism, which was characteristic of me. In a way, I lived in isolation.

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### School in Delhi

Riess: What were the schools like?

G.B. Lal: Well, they were primitive schools, and they didn't want--my brother particularly didn't want me to get any bad habits, he was afraid of homosexuality and things like that, and he said he'll teach me.

Another thing was, they expedited my formal education, because then my father retired and went back to live in Delhi, and the whole family went back there. This was just about after Queen Victoria's death. Now I was about a little over ten, and at first they thought that they would tutor me at home still, and let me into college at the age of twelve years. But that they couldn't manage, because in Delhi they didn't have facilities for that, and my brother was busy and he couldn't tutor me in all the subjects.

In any case, then they put me into high school, the two top classes of the high school, and there are ten classes, in the upper ten, matriculation or whatever you call it, a two years' course. We call it the eleventh grade, and the twelfth grade was the last of the high school. And they put me in the eleventh at the age of twelve years, and they regretted that it delayed my schedule two years.

Now, this is important, I come to a very different kind of culture. The school and the college that I attended brought me into direct contact with Englishmen. This is an educational set-up established in Delhi. It's still called--very important--called St. Stephen's Educational College and School, sent from England. Cambridge University and London were behind this thing. They sent the professors and teachers from there.

The junior professors--it was a Christian institution--were all Protestants, High Church people, very loyal to the British Empire. They were Englishmen. They were all MAs of Cambridge University, mathematics tripos, all kinds of things.

This was my first direct contact with Englishmen and with Christianity. My father was a very great believer in taking from the English what they considered good things. He certainly wanted me to get an English education. More than that, he insisted all the children should get vaccinated, so that none of us got the smallpox, for which I am very grateful to him, because so many others did.

Riess: Did others not believe in vaccination?



G.B. Lal: Vaccination was not compulsory there. The British never gave it to anybody; you had to go and pay extra, and it was a sign of great enlightenment if any Indian would go and get his children vaccinated. And I escaped smallpox because my father insisted.

Riess: St. Stephen's was a missionary school?

G.B. Lal: St. Stephen's, yes. It was St. Stephen's Mission School. It was a British, English, London--the University of Cambridge supplied the funds from England. And while their hope was to convert the Indians into Christianity, in all my lifetime I knew only one professor, Indian, who adopted Christianity, in order to keep his job. [laughs] But that's a different story.

We wanted to study all we could, but like the Jews we stick to our old culture; that's for us the things that matter. Anyway, in St. Stephen's I came into contact with real Englishmen of very high, great quality. They were all religious people, like monks, and were all bachelors. They had no families, and they had a women's mission, medical and so on, separately, but that's not my business.

But here, [in the morning as] the school started--first I was at the school and later on the college also--you had a Bible reading. The Bible class was their first one--as it is in some parts of the United States also. And on Fridays, or Saturdays--I forget which--once a week, instead of just reading the Bible, everybody got together and they listened to some Christian sermon; the principal or some professor would give a kind of general one-hour sermon. Then the regular classes began.

Well, one of these English professors was Noel Marsh. This professor lived on the college. I still remember him, very nice man, a very handsome man, very good teacher, and also very dedicated, devoted to his religion and to God and to the Empire.

He opened the first book of Genesis, and he read about creation.

I said, "Sir, in our class in physical geography," which means geology, "we learned that the rocks are millions of years old; but here it says that the world was created 4,400 years before Christ, six thousand years ago." (I saw the dating which was on the margin of the Bible, St. James version.)

"How can it be?" I said. I was thirteen years old, then. He looked at me and got angry, and he said, "The Indians are barbarians!" Of course, the whole class rose in rebellion. "Why are we barbarians?!"

He says, "Oh, barbarian means foreigners in Greek."



G.B. Lal: We said, "We're not foreigners in our own country. What do you mean? How can we be foreigners in India?"

Oh, so we had a lot of trouble. Afterwards, he became very gentle, very friendly to me. But I remember this, I never forgot that.

Riess: It shows you how thin the margin was.

G.B. Lal: I was thirteen years old: now they have the evolutionist controversy here, and I think back to my days of 1900 what's happening to the world, in this America [laughs], same issue. So I am very much amused.

Riess: This man who said, in the heat of irritation, that the Indians were barbarians; do you think that he really felt that, in fact?

G.B. Lal: Oh, he became a very nice man afterwards, would play football, we became friends. But he was fresh from England. He just blurted out what was in his head, because he was offended by the fact that I should throw Charles Darwin into his face. I don't blame him, really.

Riess: Did your family have personal friends who were British? In other words, was there casual, social interchange?

G.B. Lal: After the university contact we invited some of these Englishmen, sometimes, to dinner in our homes, and to make friends with them. So we had some kind of social contact.

At age fourteen I graduated from high school and was admitted to the university.

The colleges were like the British system in England. The university was a government affair there. It was a government university for the whole province of the Punjab, as they call it, and the headquarters were in a town called Lahore, now in Pakistan. But Delhi was part of that system. Our college examinations were held in Lahore; we used to go there for the big examinations yearly. The government made papers for all the colleges of this province. They prescribed the same books for courses for all the colleges.

### The First Coronation Durbar

G.B. Lal: Anyway, a very important thing happened just about the time that I had passed my examinations and was ready to go to college. There took place what they call the first Coronation Durbar. This is



G.B. Lal: something I'll explain to you. That was a British imperial levee. What do we call it? It means a king's court, holding the court. Well, this is one of the world's most spectacular affairs.

The Viceroy of India at that time was a man by the name of Lord Curzon. His party was the Tory party, like Madame Thatcher; he was conservative, and a very thorough imperialist. He'd die for the Empire; to him the Empire was everything. He was a very great imperialist, a lot more than Churchill was.

Now, Queen Victoria had died, as I say, at the turn of the century, and King Edward the Seventh had succeeded her, after waiting a long time, and they held this Coronation Durbar in Delhi to proclaim Edward the Seventh the Emperor of India. This was a great ritual of the Empire; that's why they call it the Coronation Durbar. But the king didn't come; the viceroy took his place.

Now this function, all the Indian rulers, dynastic rulers, maharajas and nabobs, they all came to take part in it. Foreign nations, including the United States and the great princes in Germany, sent a conference--this was a gigantic world proclamation of Empire, of rulers.

Well, I was young and I had lots of fun with it, because here was this great show, and the maharajas came, and they had their camps, really gaudy camps. Bikaner had its camp, Patiala had its camp.

Riess: Was it really beautiful?

G.B. Lal: Oh, they had great tents and gardens and decorations, chandeliers and soldiers and everything. Then they played polo. I loved the polo games between the maharajas. I saw some of them. It was a great excitement to me.

Then, one thing particularly influenced my family. Before the day of the coronation ceremony--when the proclamation of the Empire was made and so forth, by the viceroy, and all the princes were there--they had a parade, and all these participants passed through the city, from the headquarters of the viceroy to the Red Fort of Delhi to the main streets of my city, and so on. And all the bombs and all the guns firing, and military bands, and the viceroy, and the Indian prince and the viceroy's wife, they rode elephants, in a procession, according to rank. And all the elephants were decorated with golden ribbons and God knows what.

My brother painted a picture of this procession, and it took him ten years to make a picture of that. It was a masterpiece because he did that miniature work, using watercolors, on a large



G.B. Lal: piece of vellum; and he framed it in glass, and then he gave it to Maharaja of Patiala. It must have been his palace, his avenues, I don't know. In any case, that was why he became particularly [famous]--every day I could see him making this picture and I forgot the durbar.

This Delhi durbar, which was a great ritual of loyalty to the Empire, and that's what it was meant for, suddenly had an effect: it awakened the citizens of old Delhi, because they were by cultural heritage the Moghul Empire until 1837. Delhi was the capital of the Moghul Empire of India. The Moghul dynasty was supposed to be--the British had broken up. But still nominally, that's their old capital.

Well, after the great rebellion of 1857, when the British took over the whole Empire, and sent the emperor into prison, the city was calmed down, and all the old Delhi people just kind of felt frustrated, and tried to forget this tragedy, except in privacy. Our father never would talk about it with his children. Anybody left from the old rebellion time, we used to venerate him as a kind of demi-god, but we wouldn't talk openly, we all pretended to be loyal.

And now suddenly, the city woke up to its importance, because this was the first step for the transference of the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi. That's how New Delhi was to come along later.

Curzon's imagination was that he would make the British take the place of the Moghul Empire--see my point? Just like Rome for the Italians, that was the idea. He would become the Roman emperor of India.

So he wanted to have a durbar, and he held his ceremonies right in Delhi, in the great court of the old Moghul emperor. Well, suddenly awakened in the rest of us Indians memories of that old empire. This was a very important factor in my generation, for them to become politically conscious.

Riess: Where did the awakening really begin, among what group of people?

G.B. Lal: Oh, this was going on, but I'll tell you about that in a moment.

This is a local state I'm talking about. It began right in our city of Delhi. For one thing, they cleaned it up very well, I must say. It was a dirty, old, neglected city, so now they had to clean it up, and so many things happened, polo games, this and that.



## Indian Independence Movement

G.B. Lal: And then I started at the college, St. Stephens, to finish my college degree, and this is where the change was to come. It was in 1905 that the beginning of the Indian nationalist movement became manifest. In other words, the first declaration of Indian independence--that we want to have complete independence from the British--was made at the end of 1905 by a very great Indian intellectual named Aurobindo Ghose. Sri Aurobindo, you probably hear his name now.

He was a great, gifted man from Bengal, and he was the first man to have fully come out and declared, at public meetings, we want complete independence from the British, a complete break of it. And I was caught in this moment. Now we were getting to 1905, 1906, and I was just beginning to hear about it. It was a very daring thing, for the time being, just like the Irish rebellion, "We want to get you out."

So up to the first two years of college, sophomore up to whatever you call it, I was just as loyal as anybody else. We celebrated our loyalty to the empire with all the feudal, British imperial system in our minds. And I was pretty good in science, and English literature, mathematics moderately so, and very poor in Sanskrit, these classics I took. I loved the poetry and all that in Sanskrit, the literature, Mahabharata, and the minor epics, I became very familiar with, because my father read to me the whole Mahabharata epic. (That means "the great war.") But the grammar of the dead language, I didn't think about. That was the mood up to my sixteenth year or so.

Riess: The Indian nationalist movement was not an underground movement?

G.B. Lal: No, it was started openly and bravely in 1905. Underground and all that thing was just a matter for a fight. Where the opposition goes, then they go underground. That's not at all the essence of the matter. The essence of the matter [was] declaring a purpose, and to stand up for it.

This is very important to know. We don't pay any attention--and I pay no attention--to these various forms in which we have carried on the struggle: by writing, by lecturing, by throwing bombs, by this and that--by standing up for non-violence; all these are phases of a very complicated procedure. But the purpose was definitely set and declared that time.

Until that time, they were not--I never knew anybody who was worth mentioning who openly said, "We want them out," the British. They always said, "We want home rule," or "we want 'Indianization'"



G.B. Lal: of the government services," more and more Indians instead of Englishmen, all that kind of thing was going on. That started in 1884, something like that. They called a congress.

It's interesting that the form beginning of the movement was called "The Congress Movement." That was started in 1884-85. I forget the exact date--it doesn't matter. Very interesting, the name was liberally borrowed from the United States. They didn't call it parliament; they didn't call it diet; they didn't call it assembly. They chose the most provocative name, from the Congress of the United States. This name was chosen from America.

But they were, at that time, all under the crown. And all they asked for was more and more Indians in higher levels of the British civil system--just as the women want more jobs here. This was a phase. This was not a phase of breaking away from the Empire; it was a phase going into it.

But 1905 was a very, very important year, for some reason. This was the year not only [of] the declaration of independence by India but also by Ireland; also the women's movement; also the socialist movement in England. They all came out about that time. And two great historic things always come to mind, when I think of how I got influenced by that--one was the war between Japan and Russia, in 1904-05, whenever it was, when the Japanese licked the czar--which was supposed to be the greatest monster in the world in those days.

At the same time, and before that in fact, was the tremendous resistance of the Boers to the British. The Boer war was started just before Queen Victoria died. I forgot the date--'97, '98, or what it was. And the British got enough resistance in that war to shake the whole system.

When these things happened, there were reverberations all over the world. And these reverberations were certainly part of the picture behind the rise of the Indian Liberation Movement--in a direct sense, [of] independence. Not any qualified, but straight for what we want--"You, out."

Riess: There was censorship of the news to India?

G.B. Lal: Absolutely. Everything censored like hell. Nothing came out of India, nothing went into India. We had to publish papers which were suppressed. Every day we started a press, the president made press laws. The paper could hardly run for six months--they would grab hold of it.

Riess: But, so how did you learn about the Boer War?



G.B. Lal: Oh, but this is general news, not related to Indian policy. Oh, there were newspapers, of course. We had doctored news, doctored by the British papers, but all the English newspapers went around. Only very few people knew how to read it. We got the London [Times] and Telegraph, and we had the Indian newspapers there.

Those which were not fighting at the moment--you don't tell the British to get out of India, there was no problem there. The press acts of suppression started when there was a demand for Indian rights. So that's another story. But the general news was there. Not only that, but the British sent out Indians to fight in South Africa. And the Boers came out as prisoners, right to Delhi. I used to see them, when I was a boy at high school. I used to go down and talk to them. They were camped outside of Delhi, they brought them over there.

And the impact of the Boer War just kind of shook the British evil, and brought the liberal government into power, in 1906. And that was a very important point that just coincides with what I was telling you, of the importance of the year 1905. For convenience, I call it 1905.

Riess: So at some point it was occurring to people that what had happened to the Boers was what was happening to India.

G.B. Lal: I don't think anybody put two and two together like that. It was just a kind of shock wave, that the Almightyies were not so almighty. They didn't eat up the Boers in two days; thousands of lives were killed there, enormous resistance was offered by them, and so forth. These things are not spelled out, dear, they grow; just as we have the Vietnam here, or Iran, and any of these incidents. You don't sit down and read them in the pattern unless you're a genius. What actually happens, they altered our belief as regards the invincibility and inevitable superiority of the British people. Anybody stands up and throws up a brick at them, then you say, "Well, something's wrong with the gods, too. You can get hit."

It was a very profound change, the kind of change which, I say, compares to the Reformation in the Middle Ages. Aurobindo's declaration was something like Luther's. To defy the British Empire was something like saying, "The Pope be damned." These are critical things behind which lies decades, and centuries sometimes. Isn't that true?

Riess: Yes.

G.B. Lal: What I'm trying to say is a very strange thing: that the year 1905--or approximately--it was so strange--so many transformations occurred simultaneously. Not only in the field of liberation movements; the



G.B. Lal: independence of subject nations was the most important, to be sure. But at the same time, there was a great science movement, in physics. The discovery of the radium atom cracking about this time; the fact that atoms could break up, and [were] not an indivisible thing, that itself was revolutionary.

### Har Dayal and University Influences

G.B. Lal: Now, I came under the influence then of a senior student, five years older than me, and a classmate of one of my brothers. He was the most important friend in my life, in a way, and his name was Har Dayal. He was closely related to me, my family.

Riess: "Har Dayal, Indian revolutionary and rationalist." [reading from a book jacket]

G.B. Lal: About the book I'll show you later on. He was a very important man, because he came to San Francisco, and I came because of him here. But that's a different development. What I want to say was that this man was considered the most brilliant man in the whole province of the Punjab, in the whole university system. He was first in everything, his memory was phenomenal, he could remember entire books by heart. For example, after reading Tennyson's In Memoriam he could recite the whole poem by heart. One of my favorite quotes that I picked up from him was from In Memoriam: "I hold it truth with him who sings/ To one clear harp in divers tones,/ That men may rise on stepping-stones/ Of their dead selves to higher things."

Well, it so happened that the British gave the highest honor available to an Indian scholar in those days, which was called a state scholarship. They picked from all five universities. India had only five universities in those days. If you want their names, I'll tell you, the whole government system: Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Punjab and Allahabad. There were the five university systems, government systems. The colleges could be affiliated with them. The colleges could be privately run, and so on; but examinations, or the textbooks and the guidance, all came from the government center. And they always had one college of the government itself; in Calcutta the Presidency College, in Lahore the Government College.

But Har Dayal was from St. Stephens, got a B.A. from St. Stephens, and M.A. from Lahore, and he beat the record in everything. So they gave him a state scholarship; every year, two of the most brilliant Indian scholars of all the five universities



G.B. Lal: could be sent to Oxford or Cambridge for special high studies. They learned there essentially to not only finish their work, studies in Cambridge or so forth, but also to become members of the Indian Civil Service.

In those days, the Indian empire was ruled by a set of Englishmen called the I.C.S., Indian Civil Service. It was recruited in England, it came from England. Now, of course, there are universities in India, but in those days all the lords of empire, this group of I.C.S., on top of them the viceroys and all, they were the people who ran the country, and this was a very choice aristocracy. Indians were hardly allowed into it, but they just began to open a little hole into the system, that if two of these very brilliant people went there, they can be admitted into the Indian Civil Service. This was the hope of the Har Dayal family, that he will be in I.C.S.

Riess: Could some families send their children because they had enough money and didn't need the scholarship?

G.B. Lal: No, the government sent them, it was a state scholarship.

Riess: Could any wealthy family have sent their son to England?

G.B. Lal: They did, that's how Nehru went there, that's a different story. But this was a university picked out by the state; and the prestige was due to the fact the imperial system itself had picked them out as especially worthwhile. They were trying to introduce them into the sacred fortress of the civil service system, like the Roman pro-consuls, you see. It was like giving a negro the mayorship of Los Angeles.

Riess: Token, you're saying.

G.B. Lal: Yes; that's the way it goes. So they gave him a scholarship, and of course I was five years younger, and admired him immensely. What happened was that he went to St. John's College, Oxford, and got some scholarship there to Bodleian and others, a very brilliant man.

Then he resigned his scholarship, and became a nationalist and adopted the doctrine of Indian independence. He came back to India. And before that happened, he contacted me, and he said, "You ought to go and work with me too." I said I would.

So I became a nationalist with him, I took him as my leader, because he was so much more learned. And even the last years of my college in Delhi, when I still was at St. Stephen's, he began to educate me in European history and so on, by sending me books on Irish civil independence, and Italian liberation movements, and



G.B. Lal: the rise of the German empire, Bismarck. In fact I wrote a book on Irish history, A Hundred Years of Irish History; I wrote in Hindi a book out of my study.

Well, by this time I said, "I'm going to be a nationalist, too." I finished my college career, because they didn't give any higher degrees, they had no Ph.D. there, they went up to M.A. So I got my M.A. in 1908, finished the whole five-year course.

I was secretary of the Shakespeare Club and all kinds of things, I had a lot of awards at this school. That wasn't the point. But at the scholastics, I was pretty good. I enjoyed Shakespeare, in fact I used to play parts in Shakespeare plays. We had four or five dramas, and all the boys acted--there were no girls, no coeducation, all boys. But I took part in Hamlet, I remember, I took part in The Taming of the Shrew, and that kind of thing. I was secretary of the Pickwick Club, where we read Dickens; I was secretary of the Falstaff Club, where we did lots of reading of Shakespeare outside the college.

I would not go to sports, though I tried to play a little hockey or football, but I was no good; I was mostly a bookish boy. My mind went out to Shelley and Keats. Those were the two poets I particularly loved. Wordsworth was too gloomily religious for my taste, even then. Instinctively I took to poets of beauty, whether it was Coleridge or anybody; but particularly, it was Shelley and Keats: "St. Agnes Eve," and "Adonais." Up to this day--oh God, eighty years ago--I can recall lines of Shelley: "bird-like spirit, beautiful and swift,/ Love and desolation masked."

Riess: Splendid!

G.B. Lal: [repeats the lines] It's nice poetry, you know. And the "Ode to the Grecian Urn," and "St. Agnes Eve," those things I knew.

My favorite subject, apart from English literature of the Romantic kind, was physics. Physics and mathematics were my subjects; but physics I particularly liked.

One of the reasons was that the theory of electromagnetic waves was new at that time. And the theory of light, and these radio waves, [which] these [are] called today, they fascinated me immediately. I got caught in physics and I thought, maybe I'll become a physicist.

And I would have become a physicist if I had not turned into politics.



G.B. Lal: Along in there a very important Englishman came from England, a teacher, and he played an important part. His name was Charles F. Andrews. He was from Pembroke College, Cambridge. He was a fellow of the college, a kind of professor. He came here just about the time of the beginning of the Indian independence movement, and was very conscious of what to do about this business. A very shrewd man, a very good man, but a great imperialist, even if he was a liberal imperialist--he was not like Lord Curzon, but he wanted to keep the Empire intact, he believed the Empire was the best in the world.

He was a very nice man, and he introduced me to H.G. Wells. The Modern Utopia was Wells' book which Andrews gave to me. And we began to educate him in Indian politics, we began to give him literature of Indian independence, we became friends. Afterwards, he became a very close friend of Mahatma Gandhi's, long afterwards, years after. But at first he was partially trying to keep us from getting too extreme and so forth and so on.

C.F. Andrews greatly admired Har Dayal, too. And while Andrews wanted him to go to Cambridge, Har Dayal went to St. John's College, Oxford. When Har Dayal was there, he won another scholarship at Oxford--he was a very brilliant, bright young man--but he didn't carry out his studies, which would have taken him up to I.C.S. When he resigned his scholarship, he wrote a letter to the secretary of state for India, John Morley, in London, and British members of Parliament came to see him and asked him why he'd want to do that. But anyway, he decided that he was going to go to work for Indian liberation, and therefore he couldn't keep his mind divided.

Har Dayal had been married while he was still a college student, and he took his wife also to Oxford, and there she became pregnant, and now they both came back to India, and that was the beginning of 1908. He let his wife and child stay with their parents. They were very high class people. But he himself separated himself from his family and began to rally young people like me around him. So he asked me to join him, and I went to see him.

Riess: Did Har Dayal come from the same background you did?

G.B. Lal: His younger brother, and three or four elder brothers, were very brilliant lawyers. His father, I think, was in service to the British government. He married a cousin of mine on the Patiala side.

So one condition of my agreeing to work with him--he was married, but I wasn't--I decided, "I'm not going to marry." Because to put your head into the lion's jaws, you better avoid it [marrying].



Riess: In other words, you don't want to be responsible for anyone else at a moment like that. -

G.B. Lal: Yes, what would I do with a wife and children? Most of my colleagues in the liberation movement married. They all have trouble with their wives; they have to leave them, run away from them, something like that. It's a messy affair. But that's the way it was.

This time, after the beginning of 1908, he launched a campaign of complete non-cooperation with the English government. Particularly, he appealed to the young people, the intellectuals of India, who were running the government, not to serve the British in any capacity, certainly not in the British service, government service.

Then he wrote, among the many articles that they published on this campaign, he wrote one article which is really a classic, I think, and that was called "The Social Conquest of the Hindu Race." The idea was that a foreigner can conquer by the sword, but he cannot maintain his domination unless the people are psychologically turned over to them. In other words, they begin to regard them as superior, and make them leaders in every national movement in their own country.

In fact, he said, this is strange, that even to promote Hinduism, the Hindus have Englishmen to tell them what Hinduism is. As, for example, Annie Besant, he didn't like that. Here's a woman come from England to tell us what Hinduism is. What kind of slavery is that? That is the point I make.

So the British now decided to arrest him, but he had an official in the police, friends among the police, even, and they tipped him off to get out and he left there towards the end of 1908, came over to the West. He first came to London, then he went to Paris. Then he came to the United States, first to Harvard, then California.



## II TO AMERICA TO LEARN

### Scholarships for Indians

G.B. Lal: In the beginning of 1910 or so, Har Dayal was in San Francisco. There he became a lecturer at Stanford University in Indian philosophy, and was very familiar with both the universities. He became the friend of Fremont Older and his group.

He suggested the establishment of a scholarship to get to America Indians of high quality, who used to go to England for higher study. He said this is the country they should come. So the University of California accepted the scheme, and the terms of it were that graduates of the Indian universities should apply, send the applications, and the committee here would pick out the best. There were four or five of us came here, and I was one of them. I landed here at the end of August, 1912, and that was the beginning of my career in the United States. And Har Dayal introduced me to his friends, and I followed a great deal of his advice. I collaborated with him.

Riess: Did the older generation, your father's generation, take to the teachings of Har Dayal?

G.B. Lal: They paid no attention to him at all, they didn't know what he was doing. They didn't really notice. He was a patriot, that's good enough. They were not interested in him; they were interested in their own sons, and their careers. To the extent Har Dayal tried to get their careers curtailed they didn't like him, they interfered with him. But that's a different story. They considered him a great patriot, but a real danger for their families.

Riess: You once mentioned that American history--the story of how the Americans overthrew the British--was never taught in India.



G.B. Lal: That's right, not in my time. And Har Dayal sent me books on the American commonwealth. When I came here, of course I took courses in history and everything else.

One of the members of that committee that worked with Har Dayal in getting Indian students was Arthur Upham Pope, who was assistant professor of the department of philosophy, in aesthetics--that's how he got into the Persian rug affair. I think he was the chairman of this scholarship committee, as I recall.

Now an important event took place that would determine my fate and everything else; and that was in December of 1912, around Christmas-time, I think, the 23rd of December or so, when we were having Christmas vacation for the first time.

### The University of California

G.B. Lal: I don't have to tell you that my excitement, the experience of the Berkeley campus, was simply amazing to me, because it was completely different from the British system. The fact that there would be coeducation was one of the most exciting things for me. I never dreamed it was possible. Here girls sat next to me, and it was just a completely different world. Professors dealt with us as equals, we were friends. I mean I was so excited and enchanted, the whole thing!

Riess: And Wheeler was a great believer in student self-government.

G.B. Lal: I remember that, co-op stores, yes. In fact I had some very funny experiences. We had a cafeteria, co-op, so one day I went there, early in my career, and I heard the students at lunch-time yelling, "Hot dogs, dogs, dogs!" I didn't know what they were talking about.

So when everybody had finished, and I was eating some beans and pie, a glass of milk, I went up to this patrician young fellow, blond hair, I said, "What do they mean, this dog?"

He said, "Don't you know? Every evening we pick up all the puppies on campus, we ground them up, you want some?"

I said, "oh, no, no." [laughs]

Riess: You said that you had been a feminist since the age of five?



G.B. Lal: Yes, I certainly, by the age of eleven or twelve, I was standing up for all the girls' rights. I wanted to know why my sisters didn't go to college. This was the influence of my older brother; he was a great fighter for women's rights, ahead of his time.

This was something fantastic, that women should be so friendly, and college professors—when I went, you know the campus, when Wheeler came I took my hat off. Every professor of mine, I'd see them on campus, I'd take my hat off to them, English-style. Here they don't.

One of my fellow students, he was German, rather rough, Emile Kahn was his name, he said, "You get my goat!"

I say, "What for?"

"You take off your hat to all these, you are getting my goat." So I got very angry.

"Your goat? I don't know you have any goats, where do you keep your goats?! I don't steal anybody's goats!"

After, I asked Mr. Mencken, my friend, "What's the origin of this silly phrase, 'get my goat'?" He couldn't explain to my satisfaction.

Riess: You asked H.L. Mencken?

G.B. Lal: Oh, he was a close friend of mine, he became a very good friend of mine, all his life. But this was very funny. Those were the early days.

### The Great Rebellion

G.B. Lal: But I am coming to the important issue, and this was that Christmas-time of 1912, the viceroy of India was making an entrance, took a first step towards making Delhi the capital of India. What he did was, he had an elephant parade, and he rode on this parade through the streets of Delhi, just as his cousin had done; and he had a bomb thrown at him. This was a very important event. This was a challenge to them, that they can't take over India, at least Delhi. This excited us, because the news came on the wire.

I think I had some friends who were arranging a dinner for the students, our own students in Berkeley, near the campus somewhere. And they asked Har Dayal to be the guest of honor; he was the senior



G.B. Lal: man among us all. He came out, and he said, "Now we'll drive the British out, and the revolution has gone back to our city; we're not going to let them get back to Delhi."

Well, there were some young sikhs, farmer boys, students, they were very much influenced by that. And then Har Dayal said, "Let's start a movement, let's support our men in Delhi."

Later on it turned out that the group that had thrown the bomb included the most intimate friends of Har Dayal and me, and that our names were also mentioned in their trials. So we decided we can't go back to India now; and that was the turning point in my decision to get into the currents of my later life.

Riess: You would have been jailed by the British?

G.B. Lal: Or hanged. I don't know what, that's just guess-work.

Har Dayal said to me, "We are not going back there; this is a great country, we will work for our country from here. Let us mobilize several thousand Indians here, farmers and so forth, and start a movement for Indian independence here, because in India they'll crush us anyhow; they'll put everybody in jail."

He said we must start a newspaper in this country, we will start in San Francisco. There was started a newspaper, and the newspaper, they deliberately called it The Great Rebellion. The Urdu name for it is "gadar." The word "gadar" means the rebellion of 1857 that the British call the Great Indian Mutiny. Deliberately he called his paper that, and he asked me to write and cooperate with him.

But this was not to be done in the English language, it was to be in Indian language, so that our people could read it. It was not a newspaper in the ordinary sense, because it had no price, it had no advertising, no commercialism, no religion. It was a purely secular, political and philosophic paper, and it was given away free. The money was subscribed to our people; they'd collect their money and give it to them.

Riess: It was circulated where?

G.B. Lal: All through San Francisco. Started in San Francisco, Number 1, 1913.

This led to a very great reaction, because many of our men went there and actually worked in the army, and so forth; and eventually, the British became so enraged that they took a kind of revenge when they committed the Massacre of Amritsar they call it, in 1919,



[The following may be reproduced with G.B. Lal's Oral History. It should note EEP as the author and also that it is summarized from his book about to be published on the Indian Nationalists in the Bay Area in World War I, Hindoo].

On April 5th 1917, Charles Warren, the Assistant Attorney General sent a telegram to John W. Preston, the United States Attorney for the Northern District of California instructing him immediately to arrest a large group of Indians, mainly members of the Ghadar Party, and also the diplomatic staff of the German Consulate. Included in this message were special instructions for the arrest of Gobind Behari Lal. That day, Thursday, President Wilson ordered defensive sea areas established for important coastal points. The Nation was rapidly preparing for war.

On Friday, the 6th, the United States entered the First World War.

That weekend in a series of raids by Federal marshals, Lal was arrested in Berkeley. He was charged with violation of the Neutrality Act, i.e. he had allegedly participated in a "conspiracy to set afoot a military expedition against an ally of the United States." This was the culmination of five year's work for freedom of India from British rule. As a student at the University of California, Lal had learned his politics from Har Dayal. Under Dayal's direction, the revolutionary Ghadar party was founded at the Hotel Shattuck in 1913. The party was the focus of political organizing among Indian students at Berkeley and Stanford and also among Indian agricultural workers in Central California, Oregon, Washington state, and British Columbia. After March 1914, when British agents forced Har Dayal to flee this country, Lal became an aide to Ram Chandra, Dayal's successor. After August 1914, when Britain went to war with Germany, guns, men, and propaganda (in several native languages) began to be sent by the Ghadar Party in San Francisco to India for armed revolt. These efforts were largely financed by the German government, the funds being channeled through the German Consulate in San Francisco. In 1915, two ships had left San Diego and Los Angeles, for the transport of weapons to Bengal... the Annie Larson and the Maverick. That same year the Indian garrison in Singapore had mutinied as a direct result of the activities in California.

There was a small group of faculty members that supported the Indian nationalists on campus. This included Thomas Harrison Read, Fritz Konrad Krueger, Arthur Ryder, and most importantly, Arthur Upham Pope. Pope was a key connection to Phoebe Hearst, the staff at The San Francisco Bulletin (Fremont Older, John D. Barry, Lemuel Parton, and through them to Sara Bard Field), David Starr Jordan of Stanford, and also to Walter Lippman. In 1915, Lal traveled East, visited with Lippman in New York at The New Republic, and went on to England. There he stayed with politically active Indians and English socialists, such as Graham Wallas. Har Dayal was in Berlin at this time as part of the Berlin Indian Committee, which communicated with the group in San Francisco. Lal returned from England and continued working with Ghadar.

As with the others who were arrested, he was able to raise bail from fellow Indians and from the Party's funds. He was arraigned on 10 July in the Federal District Court at 6th and Mission in San Francisco. On 14 August, he pled not guilty. On a Wednesday in November, the 20th, there started what was to be the longest and most expensive (but least remembered) trial in American history: the the so-called "German-Hindu Conspiracy Trial."

In the index to the transcript of the trial, there are over sixty entries devoted to Lal. The political purpose of the trial for the Americans was to illustrate the apparently endless number of plots that the Germans had instigated... the "smoking gun" of the German threat. The testimony today almost has a flavor of the Keystone Kops or Buster Crabb and the Secret Agents. However, it did take place, and it was a very serious matter for the British. The vast bulk of the soldiers that held the line in Belgium in 1914 and around the Empire in general were Indian. In the mind of the British, the loss of this manpower meant a grave threat to the Empire. [This whole story was to be repeated in World War II through the person of Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian Legion that fought with the German Army in France in 1944.]

On 30 April 1918, over a year from his arrest, Lal was sentenced to a year in a jail. He served his sentence at the Alameda County Jail in Oakland. For the man who had fed peacocks in India and believed in science as the salvation of all things, this must have indeed been a hard time. It is not difficult to imagine the reasons why Gobind Behari Lal never wanted to speak of this period. Not only did he come close to losing his right to stay in the United States, but also he might have lost his life. Deportation would have meant a second trial on his return to India. Sentences of hanging or life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands were more the rule than the exception for Indian nationalists.







G.B. Lal: April 13 I think it was. There was enough reason to believe that one of their main reasons was to take a kind of revenge of fear, on account of our movement here, because these men went back there to the Punjab.

That changed the history of India, because Mahatma Gandhi right then took leadership of the movement there. So, in a sense it can be said that the work of a few Indian students, college students and others, outside of India, not only here but in Europe, too, was the nursing of the movement from abroad, until the time came when it went back and matured enough to become indigenous again. That is the point I'm trying to make: it's a very elaborate picture of history.

Riess: Who financed the newspaper?

G.B. Lal: Fundamentally our own people, farmers, there were several thousand farmers, and workers; we would need to go out to meetings, collect the money, talk to them.

Riess: When you mention the Indians who lived on farms, aren't they very different, or did they all feel the same about everything?

G.B. Lal: They didn't know a thing about it at all. This is a very interesting question you raise, why the intellectual Indians, college-age and so forth, were nationalists in their opinions. They would sing songs, and become orators and so forth, but they had nothing to worry the British too much about.

But when we got hold of these Indian farmers here, who were tough proletarians, they went back and they began to really work on the army, and they frightened them. They were people of action.

This is the masses. Har Dayal's originality was that an intellectual like him, a very great intellectual of India, and he took me with him, our group was the first to contact what we call the masses; and they were not crushed masses, but tough, good yeomen. They were active people who made their money; some of them became rich. They worked on the farms, they grew cotton, and wheat and potatoes and all.

Riess: They were already very independent to have come to this country anyway?

G.B. Lal: Yes, that too is a story that I don't know fully, except part of it would be due to their having been stimulated already in India. They heard about [the United States]. Then the shipping companies wanted to get them out, and the railroads being built in Canada, they wanted labor, just like the Irish came here. That was something



G.B. Lal: like the Irish Famine immigration here. They were emigrants who came--not particularly political-minded, they had come to make a living for themselves. They were a hardy and independent people, and many of them were soldiers of the British army. Some of them had been brought by the British themselves in Hong Kong and so on, to fight their fight. So they came here.

The class which I attended, and started working in political science in Berkeley, one of my class fellows was Sun Yat Sen's son. He and I were very close friends, he'd come and have dinner with me all the time.

Riess: Was the Cosmopolitan Club at Berkeley an interesting group?

G.B. Lal: I belonged to it, yes. It was a kind of feeble affair, but it was all right. We used to meet in Stiles Hall. It was kind of Christian, YMCA kind of business, and I remember the man, a very nice fellow, Griffin or something? I forgot.

I made some very good friends at that time. One or two of my colleagues there became very famous people here, rich people. One of them was Ayer, a big publicity man. There was a young lawyer, one of my classmates, who made a million dollars for attacking something, right here. We used occasionally to meet him.

What I was trying to say is eventually I got my apprenticeship in public life, a great deal through working with Har Dayal and his Indian paper. Then when I separated myself from this work, when the United States entered war, then I decided to enter the mainstream of American life.

But if I hadn't had the sense of public affairs, I couldn't have gone into American journalism. In fact I was invited, I didn't apply for any job, I was invited by the Daily News to come and be on the staff, in 1922 or so. That's a different story.

Riess: I was reading Indian history this morning. The massacre at Amritsar, it sounds like, would not have happened if that one particular British--

G.B. Lal: Dyer?

Riess: General Dyer, if he hadn't been such a fool.

G.B. Lal: No, the viceroy himself, Lord Chelmsford, he approved of it; Lieutenant-Governor Dyer approved of it, they all did. Dyer was of course the general, and he shot them down, so his job was lost; Mr. Churchill removed him.



G.B. Lal: But that's all a lot of rubbish. There are books written to justify, lots of them, defense in the realm of action and all that. What had happened was, the war was over, and during the war they had censorship and all that kind of thing, anyhow. Then they wanted to perpetrate that military dictatorship continually there, and they published a report, where the story is mixed up. Anyways, in that report it's clearly written that the government had to do something like it, even before the massacre. They said that the movement, Har Dayal's movement here, and the Bengal Revolutionaries, all that made it very important to continue with these defense laws, they called them, security laws, military dictatorship.

I don't know that there's any simple, easy answer to this thing, once it spreads, a certain kind of rebellion. They lost their heads. And their logic was perfectly all right, they were like old Roman soldiers who wanted to crush the rebellion.

What they had not anticipated, and nobody had there, was that a man like Gandhi, a middle-aged lawyer, would go up there and give such a challenge, and I didn't believe in him for a long time. How could he do that? I thought he would just talk and do nothing.

But when I met him, I saw a man of character. That's a unique story by itself.

Riess: Har Dayal is called a precursor of Gandhi.

G.B. Lal: He was preceded by thirteen years or so, yes. But Gandhi had a character that Har Dayal and nobody else did.

Riess: Were you and Har Dayal, and your friends, aware of Gandhi?

G.B. Lal: Aware? We heard of him. Yes, we used to hear of him, and his foreign work in South Africa; I knew, we all heard, that he was there, trying to stand up for the rights of the Indians in Africa.

Well, I didn't take it seriously at that time. Of course, he was not anti-British that time; he had no interest in getting the British out of India but to stand for justice between the races. He was anti-racist. But we thought, what the hell had that got to do with it? The laborers go down and everywhere they're kicked around like slaves. Why do they have to do that sort of thing? You can't do something for them, you see.

We didn't think that this kind of fooling around in the colonies would do any good. Unless you have a state, you're just nowhere at all, you're not the people. Our viewpoint was different.



G.B. Lal: And for a long time I didn't like Gandhi with his non-violence movement. Why? The part of the rebellion was all right, he told the British to get out of India, that part all agreed with. What we didn't like was his saying that we should not raise a hand against the British if they kill you. My view was, and still is, that if the people--as a philosopher, he was a very great man, he belongs to the future--but as a nationalist, you tie your own hands and you are nowhere. If somebody attacks us here, we're going to fight them. It happened at Pearl Harbor. Pacifist, non-Pacifist, everybody [wanted to] attack the Japanese.

So I don't believe, at the present state, that the people, or sects or anybody, who have been hiding in submission for ages, they should take a vow of non-retaliation under any circumstances. I don't go for that.

Riess: So do you think that Indian liberation would have come earlier, with a different leader than Gandhi?

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#### The Power of the University-Educated Man

G.B. Lal: The Indian transformation is a wonderful example, to my mind, of the power of university education. It was the university-educated men--and Gandhi was one of them--who had dissolved the mighty British empire of power. And in that I see today the hope, perhaps, for the world, because I believe that the force of the universities can become the great decisive factor in what I call "peaceful progress."

Progress with militarism has been in history; peace, with no progress, has been in history; but the combination of peaceful progress has been god-damn not realized yet. I pin my faith upon the educated man of the world.

Someday the university power will show in the world, as it has shown in India. All of these men were university men; Nehru, Gandhi, Har Dayal, they were all college people. Seven hundred million Indians had faith in them. You need not only book-learning; what you need is character. You have to have your ideas explicit; we want to be human beings able to determine our own life, the right to live, right to eat, right to medicine, right to education, it should be for everybody.



G.B. Lal: Of course how to achieve it, some is now being done. Well, arms are becoming very dangerous. They may be the means, but probably the cost is so great that you wouldn't have anything left, possibly.

Then, what is the alternative? No longer the soldier's way, but the scholar's way, especially the scientist's way, who is the one who can solve all the problems of life right now under the other kinds of dictatorship.

Anything necessary, whether you make weapons, or cultivate corn, or look for energy, you work with a professor. Well, someday the idiots will wake up. This is a conviction I've often lectured on; it is knit in my mind out of the experience of India.

One day, I forgot, it must be 1950 or something, I was in New York City, and I had a lunch with my old professor, Dr. Alfred Kroeber, the anthropologist. First I asked a question. I said, "Dr. Kroeber, can you name me half a dozen intellectuals, first-rate intellectuals, whose ideas have changed history profoundly, thinking, feeling, laws?

He said, "I can't do that." I said, "I'm going to mention some. Say what you think of them. An Englishman by the name of Charles Darwin."

"Yes."

I said, "All right. A man by the name of Karl Marx."

"Yes."

"And a man by the name of Sigmund Freud."

"Yes."

"A man by the name of Einstein."

He said, "You know, you are flattering me."

I said, "What for?"

He said, "I'm a Jew, and you mention most of them are Jews."

I said, "Isn't that a fact?"

He said, "Yes, that's true. What difference does it make?"

But you see what I'm coming to? This is what I'm coming to. Then I said to him, "Let us take an anthropologic look. What do you find? From time to time in history, some particular institution of society becomes the dominant, leading institution.



G.B. Lal: "Look back, three thousand years ago in Egypt, they had the emperor, Pharaoh. He was the imperial state, the center of all life. Then, they collapsed, they had their day, they went home. Originally the family must have been [the leading institution], but that goes without saying, since the caves.

"But after this family came the imperial state, where the emperor was a kind of father of the whole damn people he ruled. After that came the world religions; the Roman empire collapsed, the Egyptian empire gone, Islamic empire, Persian empire, gone, the Greek empire dissolved.

"Who came then? Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. This was a thousand years where the dominating institution was religion. And that also ended by the Renaissance in Europe.

"Then there began nationalism. What's the difference between nationalism and old-time rulership? The nationalism is something in which the king, or the appointed head of the state, identified themselves with the people. In nationalism the whole people are, somehow or other, political-minded. They participate in some way or other with the system. This is nationalism; it's different from pure monarchy, and kingship of the old time.

"All right, now nationalism also had exhausted itself; it was full of problems, instability of the governments. It just fulfilled and is still fulfilling its function. It's not over yet, because millions of people never had nationalism before. They're getting into the game now, Africans and Asians and everybody. They will all have to become nationalized before the next step they'll accept.

"But meanwhile, what's going to be the central institution, that's to say the most advanced kind? It's the university, which was never tried before.

"Now," I said, "look what happened. When you had these new kings of Europe, let us say the Tudor and the Stuart rulers of England, they were so damn illiterate that they had to hire the cardinals, the churchmen, to do the job of the civil authority of the government--the famous speech of Secretary Cardinal Woolsey, or Richelieu. Pundits in India, rabbis among the Jews--they were the brainy people, they were the educated people, the literate people, and the calculating people. They could add and subtract, and write letters.

"So the kings took them into their confidence to run the government. The universities are first founded to prepare these priests. The origin of Oxford, for example, or the University of Paris, the idea was the prepare them to be Catholic priests.



G.B. Lal: "These Catholic priests were taking over the work of the government, because government needed somebody to read and write. By the time of the French Revolution, the lawyers, who came out of the priest-class, had become the rulers."

Now the lawyers' days and the priests' days are numbered. When you hear Mr. Reagan saying he's becoming a church-man, getting back to religion, and Carter going and becoming born-again business, and the Iranians having the Mullahs, and everybody groping after their priests, this is just simply to kind of keep in contact with the ordinary masses.

But whenever difficult issues come, they ask the professor. The professor or the cardinals are advisory, so far. And they dare not kick them out of the system, dare not.

That is the point I'm coming to. But they haven't caught on to their opportunity, and they don't even want to do that. If they can get the funds, and they can get all the exclusive privileges, living better, who the hell wants to go and get their noses up in a soapbox, talking to the ordinary people.

But this time's going, and it should, because they have to get money. And money will come from hoi polloi, and that's where people like me come in, the function of science. Spreading not science news, or this or that, that's only one minor affair, but to spread science among the ordinary people, so that a new kind of democracy of science develops.

There alone, you may be able to evolve a world-unifying system of universities. A world university with specialists continually in communication to solve problems, of theory, of practice, all over the world. To some extent it happens now, some calamity takes place, and the wire goes off, a telephone rings, and you send advisors to [the spot].

This is my evolutionary dream. It may never happen.

Riess: When you were talking to Alfred Kroeber--

G.B. Lal: He said, "This is a wonderful idea; the only thing is that it won't happen very soon." I said, "I never put down the date on it." [laughs] "What do I know about the time?"

But you see, up to this time, what do we have? We have American scientists, Scientific American, National Academy of Science of the United States, Royal Society of England, National Academy of Science of India. Scientists are cut up in all the national groups. Some way, these damn old priests, they will not change by themselves, if they're comfortable, like with the medieval priests of Catholicism.



G.B. Lal: Someday a Luther will rise, but can come only out of the ordinary people. That is why I'm one of the pioneers of science newspapers in this country--and I always have had that belief, even from the beginning, always, that some day we'll transform the ordinary man. Popularization of science, to me, is a cause. And that's why I prepare the series of physics for the ordinary hundred thousands of people down in Los Angeles.

They didn't know what matter is. They don't know what energy means. They talk the word, they have not the least idea. The publisher of a newspaper said to me, "Please tell us, what does it mean, 'anti-matter'?" Very good question, because they don't know what matter is, anyhow.

Riess: Dr. Lal you have to stop now! [interruption in tape]

On the jacket of the Har Dayal book it reads, "Har Dayal's patriotic activity in the early part of his adult life accelerated in an explosive manner the departure of English rule from his country, India. He was one of the outstanding leaders of the so-called 'extremist phase' of the Indian Independence Movement, which was the pre-cursor of the Mahatma Gandhi wave." This is from Dr. Gobind Bahari Lal's introduction to this book by Emily C. Brown.

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### III INDIA, SYSTEM AND CASTE

[Interview 2: July 16, 1981]

G.B. Lal: [looking at photo book of India under the Raj] I want you to take a look at this system in which I was spending my childhood, the ancient princes, palaces--these happen to be photographs of a certain period of the '80s. This was like an antique civilization.

Riess: Are there any pictures that really look like your home?

G.B. Lal: Not my home, but in the state in which I was partly brought up. These castles, for example. You see, the pictures do give a little feeling of what we were talking about last time. All of this is part of the background [referring to picture].

Riess: Marvelous, a hunting party with tiger skins.

G.B. Lal: This was the atmosphere of my childhood. You see the picture of the princes, the Englishmen, it's all part of the picture. They were the Empire. Both the British imperialist and the feudal system, together. The feudal part was the princes, the empire part was overall--you can't get the picture, this country has nothing like it. Why I mention it is because it gave me, instinctively, a political orientation. We lived in a hierarchy, were very conscious of the state. The importance of state was kind of in my cradle, on account of my relationship to the ruling princes.

Riess: Yes, we talked about this last week, your families, the different areas of India they came from and their different place.

G.B. Lal: My original home, and my family, for generations, was the city of Delhi. That's the capital of the Moghul Empire. I was born there. My parents were born there. My grandfather was some sort of official at the court of the last Moghul emperor in Delhi. So Delhi is our home, and we're very part of it. That's the reason I call myself a Delhi man. That's my fundamental city.



G.B. Lal: But we took our Delhi culture with us when we went to work in the states, also. What I am trying to get at is that two of the states were important in my family background; though they were independent states for all domestic purposes, that is, they make their own laws, they had their own headquarters.

But when it came to dealing with other states, or with foreign countries, they had to do that through the British. The British supremacy was accepted by them, and they had kind of treaty relationships. In fact, that's what they used to call "The King's Allies." They were the king emperor's allies.

But the two important states; one, my father's side, Bikaner state. His uncle was prime minister of Bikaner, so he got him there. And my father served three successive Maharajas, or kings, kinglets, what ever you call them [laughing]—of Bikaner. And the last one, the one that ended with the end of British Rule, was called Maharaja Ganga Singh, who I met personally for myself when I was a very young child, when I was presented to him. Then, as I said, on my mother's side it was Patiala.

So we moved between those two states. I was living in a prestigious culture. All the court talk—I used to hear, "Oh, the Maharaja did this, went out hunting, polo, etcetera, mistresses, etcetera." Day and night we heard that, just like children here would overhear their parents.

By long heredity our houses were state service people, civil servants and so forth. And then they became professional, like lawyers, doctors, teachers, professors. So we come from the professional middle class, neither princes nor paupers.

Riess: But that's not a matter of caste?

G.B. Lal: It was a matter of caste, almost. Our caste is called Kayastha. This is a very influential caste of maybe 50 million or more people in India today. Anybody of the name of Bhatnagar, or Mathur, or Saxena, they're all castes. There's a professor at the University of California, Bhatnagar, working right here, a professor of biochemistry. Here is what he wrote when he gave me a gift of the book.

Riess: [reads] "To Dr. Lal, a great scientist, humanist, and most of all my best friend and mentor, with affectionate regards, Raj—" What is his name?

G.B. Lal: Rajendra Sahai Bhatnagar, yes. He is working here at the hospital in U.C. His last name, Bhatnagar, is a caste name, and he belongs to my caste.



G.B. Lal: I never use the caste name, I'm opposed to the caste system. I never use the caste name; I have a caste name, called Mathur, but that I despise because I'm opposed to all caste systems anyhow. But many of them use it; I can tell by the last name whether they use the caste or not, right off.

Riess: What does "Lal" mean?

G.B. Lal: "Lal" means squire, or landed gentleman. The word has a number of meanings, but that's the way of languages. In this context it means, probably, some kind of landed gentry. But it means also red, it means also the name of a beautiful bird, so all of that is nonsense. And also it means ruby! The same word means a number of things, but in this case it means, "squire." Supposed to be a gentleman of some kind not the top nor the bottom.

Riess: What did this caste system actually mean for you and your family?

G.B. Lal: The sons of any caste in India, they will marry only within their own caste; that is the essential part. It's just like O'Neills will marry the O'Neills, and the O'Connors will marry the O'Connors. It's very much like that, like the clan system of the Irish and the Scotch. MacDougals, they argue who is more superior to them, they never settle the issue. That kind of thing.

So it's a strictly medieval institution. For my childhood, before I was eight years old, I was violating everyone's rules, I helped to talk against it. I'm opposed to these marriage restrictions. Some of the castes have also food restrictions. All the Hindus, so-called, won't eat beef, just as the Jews won't eat pork, or the Orthodox Muslim won't eat pork.

So that's an ancient taboo, which in a family--well, I eat everything, that's not a problem. But what I am driving at is that this is my story, how I grew up through this orthodox family. My father was a very orthodox Hindu, by which I mean he believed that the source of all truth is in the Vedas, which are inspired by God. These are supposed to be very ancient scriptures, the source of Hinduism. Nobody knows how old it is, but usually they say five thousand B.C., three or five thousand years before Christ.

Out of that arose reformations, reform movements. The greatest of them was Buddhism. This was a reform form of Indo-Aryan Hinduism of the old type; Vedic religion. It's all the gods and so forth of the Vedas.

This is the essence of the matter. They were the great priest-caste. The priests are called Brahmins.

Riess: And that's the top?



- G.B. Lal: They think that they are at the top, but we don't think so. Because originally, they were really subordinate to the warrior caste, the Kshatriya. My caste was supposed to be a branch of the warrior caste, who were the conquerors of India. But we became the civil branch, rather than the fighting branch. This emanated from the warrior caste, knights, that's what that means.
- Riess: How do you account for the fact that when you were about eight years old, as you say, you began to doubt all of this?
- G.B. Lal: Oh, [chuckles] that's the whole story. My father was an extremely orthodox man, who was also an extremely tolerant man; he used to hold conferences when he was the ruler of part of Bikaner where all kinds of leaders could come together and argue and talk and present their case. He held court for that; he would have the Muslims and there were Jains and all kinds of people who came, and he respected all religions. He asked them to present their cases; he followed his own way.

Now, he was a very great fanatic about modern education. And he was one of the pioneers of education for women, for our community. He wrote a book, called Instruction of Women. He advocated that women should be taught, and he wrote a little book for teaching them what to do, everything. He was fanatic that women should "get education," of course of the right kind, and so forth, according to his views.

And he was very much for modern education for his sons. (Unfortunately, on which I always used to argue when I grew up, never against him, though, our sisters never were sent to college. I had three sisters, none of them were sent, they were just married.) All the four brothers went to the best college available in north India, called St. Stephen's in Delhi. My eldest brother was educated there, second brother, third brother, and myself. We all were educated there.

Now, all our brothers had different viewpoints, and everybody tolerated [each other], nobody bothered. My eldest brother was a born artist, a painter--and painting was looked down upon in the family as a craft of the lower orders, they'd buy their books, but they don't like [him] to be a painter--but he just wanted to be a painter, and you couldn't stop him. He also was a musician, and many other things, but he was a master artist, there's no question, a miniature painter. His best work was painted in watercolor on ivory, ivory and vellum.

- Riess: Do you have any of them?



G.B. Lal: Oh God, no, how could you expect to: we don't have any; we couldn't afford it.

He would take a grain of rice, and he'd write your whole name with a brush on it, straight line, you could read it without glasses. Or take a split pea, half of it, and write down half a poem on it. Marvelous coordination of the fingers. He was a remarkable man. He was the liberal of the house, and father was the orthodox. And I was the revolutionist, that's what I'm trying to get at, how I evolved out of all this.



#### IV CALIFORNIA, FRIENDS AND INFLUENCES

##### Professors at the University

Riess: To go forward a bit, which we must do, you came to the university.

G.B. Lal: I must say, from the very day I came I was received with extraordinary courtesy by everybody, from President Wheeler down. They were very courteous, because evidently they wanted the best kind of Indians to come and study at the University of California. And they respected the fact that I had certain ideas and principles. I made no secret of them, because I wrote some things in the Daily Cal myself.

I remember, for example, one of the first things they printed of mine of any significance was my impressions of Parthenia. It was new to me.

Riess: [chuckles] What were your impressions of that?

G.B. Lal: Well, the fact that the male and the female here were students together, and how they interacted. I wrote something very analytical and a professor of English literature--I think it was Herbert Cory at that time--he published it. What I'm trying to say is that I interacted.

It was Dr. Wheeler who introduced me to Phoebe Hearst, personally.

Riess: What did you think they meant by the "best kind of Indians?"

G.B. Lal: No, these were the wrong words--there are no best kind. Many of the Indian students who were here at that time were self-supporting. A few had come, but they had to work outside in order to keep themselves going.



G.B. Lal: But I was promised a certain support, before I came here. I and three or four others, we came together by a sort of competition in India. And there was a committee formed to take care of us. The committee was chaired, I think, by Professor Arthur Pope, of the department of philosophy. Har Dayal was a member of it, and he was the inspirer of the whole scheme. And there was a man by the name of Professor Teja Singh, who was a sikh, a kind of fanatic. But he was a patriotic man.

In any case, the university had approved of it--and Professor Pope was the intermediary--so we were considered as a new experiment. And we came here to do some post-graduate studies, and go back.

### Carleton Parker

Riess: What can you recall of your professors? Carleton Parker, for example.

G.B. Lal: Oh, I became very friendly with him and his wife, Cornelia Parker. She wrote a book, called The American Idyll. We became personal friends.

Carleton Parker had started a particularly interesting seminar in economics. I had a key to [the room where] we used to hold it in the library. What he brought in was how the science of economics can be related to science of psychology. Or, the question of values: what are the sources in human nature of economic behaviour?

Riess: Very big question.

G.B. Lal: Very important question. He had gone to Germany, I think, to study what they called Max Weber's economics or something like that. When he was there, his children used to run around naked, to develop their physique, and they tried some of that in Berkeley too, and he had cause for some attention--he was a very nice man. He had got this German-European scholarship in his head.

And he married Cornelia Parker, who was I think a niece of Professor George Stratton, the psychologist. So, we became--I don't remember the details where, what first time--but anyway, I took his course and we became friends.

Now, to give you a typical example, we started with a textbook which afterwards I began to consider was written by a jackass--Dr. William MacDougall. William MacDougall was very influential in



G.B. Lal: those days; he was a reactionary Englishman. But still, he was representative, came from Oxford University. And he wrote a book called The Introduction to Social Psychology, which was a kind of textbook in those days, 1908 or so, I forget the date--in which he simply said that you have a certain number of instincts, or hereditary dispositions, which are the elements which make all human behaviour.

Well, his analysis carried on--he [Parker] mentioned MacDougal. Afterwards, Freud, of course, came out, and then we had Edward Tolman, and so on. That's the whole line. The line of instincts, in other words, emphasis on rationalism, which used to be the classic economist's [economics]. Everybody was a calculating machine, and everybody's behaviour was determined by best interest--"buy cheap and sell dear"--so we're all supposed to be machines of profit and loss.

Well, this came [up against] the problem of power of emotions. The instincts, they were called. Cognition, knowledge, learning, emotion, and action, will. So all of that he [MacDougal] analyzed. He had his own ideas. He was a great believer in racialism [sic], but that's not the point.

So, Carleton Parker took that as a text, and he said, "Let's investigate local phenomena in light of this theory." I mention that because it was through him that I was interested in Freud. But anyway, this is the Carleton Parker stage. Another book I think of along the same line, came later called The Psychology of Insanity, by Bernard Hart. Also Englishman, Cambridge University.

Well, these books were now turning our attention to emotions, the power of innate emotions, not pure, lucid, calculating rationalism. That was the point we were talking about. In other words, a little deviation from the classic economics. What is the basis of the theory of value? That was the point.

I'll give you an example which will amuse you--an anecdote, it's the best that I know. Those were the times--1913 or so--when the red light abatement act was being discussed or debated, or something. And Hiram Johnson was, I think, the governor of the state. That act meant to clean up the Barbary Coast.

So the question was, what is the basis of this Barbary Coastism? The rational explanation was, it's white slavery, and there was somebody who was there to make money, and that settles it, blah, blah. So the girls do that just to make some cash.

Well, how do you find it out? They appointed a little group out of our class--I was not in it, but I think Mrs. Baker was in it. She became professor of economics later at Columbia, Elizabeth



G.B. Lal: Baker, a very brilliant woman. She was one of the women, and there were some men. So they came to the chief of police of San Francisco--White I think was his name--and he said, "All right, I'll take you to the whores and talk to them." [chuckles]

They came there, and they went back with a report that they said they enjoy the work. "What do you want us to do, to sling hash for you?" It kind of shook everybody.

Now, whom else do you want to know, dear?

Riess: Well, Solomon Blum?

G.B. Lal: Oh, he was a wonderful man. Solomon Blum, unfortunately, had tuberculosis, so he had to leave the university and went to Colorado Springs. He invited me there once to give a talk to the post-graduate students there, and I went there.

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G.B. Lal: When the First World War came, they began to persecute him [Wheeler]. And poor Benjamin Ide Wheeler was degraded, Barrows took his place, and Henry Morse Stephens and Gayley. They became the rulers of the university.

Riess: And you think that was the end of the great intellectual spirit?

G.B. Lal: My feeling is, dear, if you don't mind my saying so--this is the way I figure out things for myself. I used to say that Berkeley was the Athens of America, or at least of this region. And San Francisco was the Rome. You see? This was the way I used to figure [it] out. I think one of the professors at Oxford University who came there--a great historian of the classics--he said the same thing, that this region reminded him of Athens. What he said was, that he understood the history of ancient Athens by coming here, to Berkeley.

Riess: That's beautiful!

G.B. Lal: That's what he said. What was the name? Myers, Professor Myers. He was an Oxford University authority in classic history. So I agreed with him.

Then, there was the whole city, not only the university, which is the heart of the matter, but the whole city had a spirit of freedom that probably never existed anywhere else in history. First of all, men and women were equal--this was new to me--at least educationally and socially. But anyway, educationally. The city's mayor at my time was a socialist. His name was Stitt Wilson. And Jack London was a kind of god of the whole business. It was the age of Jack London, who called himself a socialist.



Riess: Well now, you were a very aware young graduate student. But how about the undergraduate body?

G.B. Lal: I would say this. The undergraduates in Berkeley got better education probably than did the undergraduates of Columbia, or Harvard. Why? Because the same professors taught the graduate classes as taught the college classes. Some of the best minds, who held seminars and all that, also taught the students going to be graduates.

Jessica Peixotto

Riess: You were just starting to talk about Jessica Peixotto.

G.B. Lal: Jessica Peixotto, oh yes, she was an exquisite person. She was a Jewish girl, very beautiful. She lived in Cloyne Court. I don't know whether it still exists or not. She was not married, and she was, I suppose, sought after by everybody. She was a very exquisite person. She went to study in the Sorbonne and all that kind of thing. She was a very able woman. And I used to tell her that I would like to go to Sorbonne myself.

But she was an exquisitely French, keen-minded woman, and she had studied under French masters in Paris. Elsewhere, I don't know about it. She was related to Edgar Peixotto, the artist; a great family. She became a great friend of mind, in a very delicate sort of way. I mean to say with all the courtesies that we observed.

Now, we had a seminar on social reform. Among her courses, I took one of the courses on crime, and we went to San Quentin, and talked to the prisoners, and all that sort of thing.

One day [August] Vollmer, chief of police up at Berkeley, who was a very close friend, and I think had lectured on crime for Peixotto, I said to him, "I don't see any policemen in this city; if I get lost in the street at night or attacked, it's bothersome."

He says, "Would you like lots of policemen around here?"

I said, "No, I hate them."

He said, "Well, that's the answer. We're fellow citizens, we don't need police."

All of these things were very important. They clustered around Jessica Peixotto a good deal. Dr. Peixotto had term papers, and everybody picked out [a topic]. Some people took Karl Marx for their expositions, some took somebody else.



G.B. Lal: I chose Joseph Mazzini, because I was interested in the liberation of Italy, about which I read a lot, before I even came here. So he was one of my great figures of history. What he could do for his country, Italy, maybe we could do something for India, that was the relationship. Besides, Joseph Mazzini had been influenced by Hindu philosophy, Vedantism, yes. And I took that side also into my disquisition. He talked about the duties of man, and he was a kind of Vedantist, and naturally all that appealed to me. I studied all his writings, as much as I could. And, of course I got "A" in that and so on; and then I published some of that in an Italian paper here, and also got demands that some Indian paper had, and translated it into—for our people—and all that kind of thing. It was a whole saga for me.

### The English Language

Riess: Did you have much facility in writing in English at that time?

G.B. Lal: I can't write even now, dear. I'm still a barbarian, you know [interviewer laughs], as Marsh said.

Riess: But I mean really, how was your writing in English?

G.B. Lal: They didn't throw me out, is all I know.

Riess: Well, I wondered whether you got any special help, or something.

G.B. Lal: Oh God, no, I never took anybody's help, no. I will tell you the truth: Dr.--I think the name was Benjamin Kidder--

Riess: Benjamin Kidder, that's right, in English.

G.B. Lal: [pleased] Right, then. He was secretary of the English department. You know what he used to do? He used to send me bluebooks of the students of English. So I used to make money out of those, marking the books.

Riess: Well, what can I say?

G.B. Lal: That's a fact. I needed some cash, I made it.

I wrote a paper for a graduate class in English, in which one of my fellow students was Aurelia Reinhardt, George Reinhardt's wife and president of Mills College.



G.B. Lal: We were discussing the Romantic movement in English literature. I took the unusual subject of comparing Edmund Spenser, the English poet of the days of Queen Elizabeth I, and Rudyard Kipling. It was considered quite an original paper, and I got an "A" and all kinds of praises on it. Now I haven't got a copy of any of those things, they're all lost. But that's one of the things; so I must have some sense of English, I don't know whether I had it or not.

But to be truthful, the most encouraging remark, whether I know English or not, was paid to me by H.L. Mencken, and this is what he said. He said, "Lal, you have a feeling for the language. You not only speak it grammatically correct[ly], but you have a feeling for it." Well, coming from that giant, I thought that made some real sense. But that's another point.

Riess: You had said that the grammar of Sanskrit was difficult; I wondered if English is a much easier language.

G.B. Lal: Quite a different kind of language. You see, English is an analytical language. German is a synthetic kind of language; you conjugate everything in German: "Diese, dieser, dem," you know. You have a female verb, or male, the conjugation, dative, ablative, all kind of cases.

Now, you don't have to do that case business in English, because you have participles off and on, and tiny little gadgets to perceive a difference between the subject and the object and predicate and all. It makes a lot of difference.

Our native Hindustani language is like English, in fact like French. That's an analytic language. But the Persians, and especially the Sanskrit, like the German, is different. See dear, there's nothing wrong with learning, except my teacher was rotten. Same as some aspects of mathematics, I had some awful teachers, they didn't know how the hell to put the thing. Now, I can teach some of them.

Riess: And what kind of a language is Latin, then?

G.B. Lal: You conjugate: Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, they're sister languages. They all conjugate.

Riess: You call that a synthetic language?

G.B. Lal: The conjugating languages. I don't know the technical name of it.

Riess: I was wondering whether you were saying that people who were mathematically minded were perhaps better at these synthetic languages.



G.B. Lal: Oh, that's quite a different story. Mathematics is a wonderful language itself, and I didn't have good enough teachers in mathematics to become a mathematician.

Riess: I was wondering what the parallels are.

G.B. Lal: No, I won't touch them, we'll keep them separate. These are the ways the languages come down by the priests. They had this priestly business of wonderful training. I suppose--though I haven't thought it before--that these languages were important because learning was passed from mouth to mouth; they were convenient for memorization, by learning by heart. There were no books in the ancient times; neither the Roman Catholic priests, nor the Brahmans, nor anybody else, could pass on literature by book, because there were no books. They had to learn by rote; and poetry was the form in which, therefore--now I'll give you one line of a Sanskrit poem, and you can see the convenience of it [recites line in Sanskrit]. This is pure Sanskrit. Now see, the meter, how easy, convenient for remembering?

I'll explain to you what it means: [sings the lines again]  
 "For the good of the people themselves, the righteous king levies taxes on them; just as the sun takes all the moisture to return it in thousand forms."

One of my great friends in Berkeley, a university professor, was Professor Arthur Ryder; he was a professor of Sanskrit. He staged a play called Shakuntala--it's a Sanskrit play--which he had translated himself into English.

The performance was given in two places. I participated in both of them, actively. One on Mt. Tamalpais, and one in the Greek Theatre. And they put me in the cast.

Riess: "Shakuntala" is a woman's name, isn't it?

G.B. Lal: Yes. It's a love story with the king and this girl. His translation--well, he was a great friend of mine.

Now, whom else do you want to talk about?

Riess: Alfred Kroeber.

G.B. Lal: I took a post-graduate course in anthropology with him. He was a great man. Afterwards, he studied psychoanalysis. He got himself psychoanalyzed.

Riess: By whom?

G.B. Lal: Must be some psychiatrist, I don't know.



Riess: But nobody famous--?

G.B. Lal: Well, of course I couldn't ask him that.

He wrote a marvelous book on the theories of human evolution, human civilization. And one day, as I told you before, I had a conversation with him in New York City, after he retired from Berkeley where we concluded it's an obvious fact that [the Jews] have changed the picture of history.

Riess: Was Solomon Blum a Jew?

Anna Strunsky Walling

G.B. Lal: Yes. Jessica Peixotto, too, was a Jew. Well, about the Jews, I'll tell you something: I knew very few Jews, except the most intellectual ones, and some who were refugees from Russia. One of the closest of my Jewish friends was Anna Strunsky Walling. Very, very dear. I just loved her and her family. You know, of course, whom I'm talking about?

Riess: She was a good friend of Jack London's, I know.

G.B. Lal: That's the girl. Anna did so much sorts of beautiful things for me.

Riess: You should tell a little bit about her.

G.B. Lal: Anna married Mr. Walling, who was William English Walling, who at that time claimed to be a Marxian socialist. She herself was more of a revolutionist, Tolstoyan. She was an admirer of Tolstoy. She was born in Russia, and her sister Rose, also.

They came here, I think during the revolution of 1908 [1905?] or something, I forgot--I don't remember the personal history. In any case, both of them were here in San Francisco. Anna went to Stanford. By that time, I suppose, she must have met Jack London; they wrote the Kempton-Wace Letters, they call them.

Then she married Walling and lived in the east. Walling was a descendant of some governor of Illinois or something--a rich man. And in those days, he was an outstanding philosopher of socialism. He wrote a book called The Larger Aspects of Socialism, which I admired a great deal.



G.B. Lal: So, I met them in New York, with a letter of introduction from Anna's friend here, a lawyer by the name of Austin Lewis. He was a social lawyer here. He gave me a letter for Anna.

Anna was such a beautiful personality. You have no idea. She sent me all kinds of gifts, and neckties--oh, I loved her. A great person. I got her books and things. I learned from her the greatness, the bigness of this liberated Jewish heart. A wonderful person.

Rose was very brilliant. She married Dr. Larwin [?] an economist. Anna was a brave woman. She stood up against the war, First World War, Second World War, with Jeanette Rankin. Even, she quarreled with her husband on that. He was in favor of the war, Wilson's war, and she was not. It nearly broke up the family, which didn't bother her. Fantastic person.

You want to ask me of Barrows, or somebody else?

Riess: Yes.

G.B. Lal: I had great respect for him. I considered him a great teacher of political science, and a great patriot.

He had been in the education department of the Philippines so he had some knowledge of the development of the educational system, and I admired the fact that he was, in a way, favorable to the granting and development of separate government in the Philippines, which is very different from the English attitude in India. I respected him, and he liked me. We were friends; I took a course with him.

Another man, in the same department, was Reed, Thomas Reed. He became a manager for Palo Alto, or something. He was a progressive. Dr. Barrows was, I think, a classic Republican. And Reed was on the Theodore Roosevelt, Hirman Johnson bunch, the progressives of that day. You know, the Republicans split up in two parts. So that's the way we used to know them.

But for me, they were both equally good, because I had no problem.

Riess: Stitt Wilson was the socialist mayor of Berkeley.

G.B. Lal: He was a Jew, too. His daughter Violet, she became an actress, and married a man who was an actor also. They had some kind of playhouse--I forgot all of that.



Freedom of Expression

Riess: How did having a socialist mayor affect Berkeley? I mean, what difference did it make in the running of the city?

G.B. Lal: I was too young to know these things, except that we felt there was a kind of freedom of speech and expression, or meeting; nobody bothered us. Berkeley campus, and the university classes, we used to have meetings of all kinds.

In fact, off the campus there was a little typical organization where we would meet and discuss radical or new-coined ideas. And we called it the William Morris Circle. It used to be held--once a month there were some kind of meetings--in the homes of the different members of it. No fees or anything. Open discussion of George Bernard Shaw, and this and that, and all kinds of things.

Riess: Was there a spirit of internationalism at the university, do you think?

G.B. Lal: Yes and no. We had a Cosmopolitan Club, where this was particularly promoted. Meetings were held in the Stiles Hall, off the campus. I still remember the name. We all met, particularly the Asians and the Americans, they were all interested in these things, but more religious and literary. Classical, not technology.

Nobody was socialist there. The university was not radical. In fact, at one time I think they sent out students to break a strike [in Oakland], and all that kind of thing.

Riess: To break a strike?!

G.B. Lal: Yeah, some kind of streetcar strike or something in Oakland. They were not the radicals; but they at least allowed you to read books on socialism and the study of anarchism, for example. This was part of the college curriculum. We studied the work of a man like Peter Kropotkin, and of course the founder of the culture--the great Russian prince, what was his name?--who said "property is theft," that was his motto.

This is Proudhon's statement; Proudhon was the founder of this anarchist sect in the French Revolution. But these movements were all taught, discussed freely. Nobody was suspecting you; there were no policemen watching for you.

Riess: It was the ivory tower.



G.B. Lal: Ivory tower, whatever it was, but it was very pleasant. We were not a tower, simply, because the campus was so open and lovely. Blossoming acacia trees--I still remember--burst out in yellow glory; and eucalyptus. It was a different phase of history.

Riess: Do you remember the female students as being equally well endowed in the intellectual department?

G.B. Lal: In the classes, there was equality. In other words, it would depend on what they were saying, on their performance; some were very brilliant.

Riess: And did they speak up?

G.B. Lal: Oh yes, I can't remember any suppression. We sat side by side, it was very delightful. I remember Frieda Flugelman, a girl-- must be Russian or something--a Jewish girl. Oh, she was such a hot-head! [interviewer chuckles] And my mother sent me there--!



## V NEWSPAPERMAN, PLUS

Psychology of Feet

Riess: Did you take any sciences when you came to the university?

G.B. Lal: I didn't have money for laboratory work, but I would attend any kind of lectures I could. But whatever physics I brought with me was later on so important to my own work, when I went to newspaper work, where I went to do science writing. But at that time, I couldn't afford to do things I wanted to. I didn't have that much money.

Riess: Besides which, you were very immersed in the social sciences.

G.B. Lal: No, I wanted to be three things at the same time: I wanted to be a political scientist; I wanted to be a physicist; I wanted to be an artist; and I was nothing. Couldn't do anything. [chuckles]  
[interruption in tape]

Riess: What was your introduction to the Examiner, how you got in.

G.B. Lal: Part of it, I'll tell you. I'll tell you that I started with, managed to get an entry with Mr. Coblentz, and he said to go ahead and put me to work. But it wasn't so simple, how to do it.

Riess: No, I'm sure that that's not very much of a story.

G.B. Lal: No, but I don't talk anymore. How I got to see him is not a problem for anybody else. But once I got to him, I never got out.

To start with, I was invited to start writing for American newspapers by the Daily News. The Daily News invited me.

Riess: Well, let's get you at least located in space; wherever you had been, you had come back to San Francisco.



G.B. Lal: Let's get it out of the First World War system, and get into 1920-21, like that. Then I can tell you something about it.

At that time, I was quite well known here, for all kinds of my talks, lectures, writing, all the rest of it.

Riess: On politics? You were doing your talking and lecturing on what?

G.B. Lal: I was lecturing in Paul Elder's gallery in psychology. I did lots of things. Women's clubs and all. I was a member of the poetry society, got poetry published, all kinds of things. Novels, even, I've got some lying around. Someday I'll show you. In fact I wrote some advertising copy, and so on. All of that was a searching and preparing myself whatever happened. I thought I'd write all kind--I got a motion picture scenario written.

Riess: Where were you living?

G.B. Lal: In San Francisco.

Riess: I know, but I wondered if you would give me your address.

G.B. Lal: [chuckles] Oh, I don't remember myself; I would gladly do that, I don't remember. Probably changed.

Anyway, then the Daily News telephoned to me. The managing editor asked me to write a single article about a kind of half-crazy subject. His purpose was to give some motion picture publicity to actresses. Let me explain. He had got photographs of some--

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G.B. Lal: "You're a psychologist," he said, "so you can read character by the women's feet."

I said, "What?!"

"Feet," he said. "You read the palms, don't you? You see he didn't know what the hell a psychologist did."

"Oh, I see," I said, "Well, you want me to write something about their legs, and the feet, the importance of human feet." I said, "I'll do a scientific job on it."

So I wrote an anatomical and anthropological/historical story about the importance of human feet. Erect position, the change in the foot, what it meant, the liberation of the hand, in other words, I dragged it down to science.



Riess: Not tongue-in-cheek? Was it satirical?

G.B. Lal: No, no, no--straight science. The rise of human straight-upward posture. Liberation of hands, and so forth.

So he put me on the staff.

Now, there I did one great thing; I was introduced to the city through the Daily News, because they asked me to do a series of interviews with leaders of the city. Businessman Robert Dollar, all the rich people, founder banker of Italy, Giannini, I interviewed him. Louie Lurie, Samuel Hegella [?], a whole series of people like that. I got to know them all.

Riess: Was there anything about the fact that you were Indian that was making you special in these interviews?

G.B. Lal: Only with some very rare person like Annie Besant, who of course was an Indian philosopher.\* But I had kept my hand off from swamis and things like that. These were strictly the established people. And they liked me, and I wrote about them.

#### San Francisco Bohemians

G.B. Lal: Finally, I did one great thing in that. You have a record in your library, and I don't have it. I wrote, towards the end of the year, whatever it was, an article on San Francisco Bohemians. Now, I had the whole page, and this was a creation. I simply decided to have a statement as to what Bohemianism means by the top writers themselves, starting with George Sterling. He was the leader of literary Bohemia anyhow. I had Gertrude Atherton in it, I had Charles Caldwell Dobie in it, and I don't know who the hell else. Anyway, they were supposed to be the top novelists and all that of the time.

Then I had picked out a number of first-class artists, Maynard Dixon, [Ralph] Stackpole, Charles Grant, Edgar Peixotto; and asked them to make drawings for me, to express what Bohemianism means. And they're wonderful pictures, really. You couldn't get them [with] a fortune.

This page was unique, and he published it, and I haven't got a damn copy left, because George Sterling took every copy I had.

Riess: Dr. Lal, that was the end of 1928?

G.B. Lal: I don't remember any dates, sweetheart.

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\*theosophist .



Riess: Because I could find it if you could remember the year.

G.B. Lal: You can find out--I had a lot of trouble just the other day; I want to show it to you, but there's not enough time. I don't remember any dates. You have to look--this is in The Bancroft Library. I know why. Some years ago, ten, twenty maybe, somebody telephoned to me and said he was working on some Bohemianism, and that my article was the one that had the most usefulness to him. And I said, "Where the hell did you see that?" "In the Bancroft Library." So you have the clippings? I don't have it.

Riess: Well, I will look some more.

G.B. Lal: But I'm just mentioning it. The other day--I get so sick and tired of it--a man by the name of Schwab, Arthur Schwab--I'll show you the letter here next time--he writes from San Diego. He's teaching literature there--a German, Arnold Schwab, I think. He's working on Edna St. Vincent Millay.

So he found an article of mine about Edna Millay in San Francisco, [written] somewhere in January or February of 1930. I had completely forgotten the whole damn business; and he wanted the date! "What date did you go?"

What the hell! The whole essence of the matter was that Edna Millay was here, and I went to see her. And I asked her, "Do you want to meet Robinson Jeffers?" She said, "Yes, of course." I called up Jeffers. I arranged to take her out there; I called Albert Bender, got him to drive her there, we spent a day there together. All of that, published in the damn article. I'd completely forgotten about it!

Now, he keeps bothering about, "What day was that? What time was it?"

I said, "Please don't bother me any more; I've told you everything."

Then he said, "Well, Jeffers; will you write about Jeffers, maybe? I can get it published in a magazine, they won't pay you, but you'll be immortalized."

I said, "I'm dead already, I don't want immortality; for God's sake leave me alone." So I don't--it happens all the time.

Riess: Such important names.

G.B. Lal: Sweetheart, listen: whom didn't I interview? I got close to Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Edgar Lee Masters, Jim Tully. I don't know, so many others of them--Joseph



- G.B. Lal: Auslander, his wife Audrey Weatherman. Many of them became life-long friends. Robinson Jeffers. I haven't got a damn clipping to show you.
- Riess: Every time one of these people came to town, you were automatically the person who would interview them?
- G.B. Lal: No, nothing was automatic, nobody knew who was here. It was my own inquisitiveness; I knew, if they're here, I will go and seek them out; nobody else would. They wouldn't talk to other people. H.L. Mencken, of course, I interviewed.
- Riess: What do you mean they wouldn't talk to other people?
- G.B. Lal: They don't know, they didn't even have sense to get after these people. Now Sinclair Lewis was here, you think he was going to talk to any reporter? He didn't. There's so damn [many] reporters, all kinds of reporters here. He never talked to anybody except me.
- Riess: Because the others didn't have the sense to ask him any questions?
- G.B. Lal: I don't know what the circumstances were; I can't go and philosophize, make lies to you. It was just a fact.
- Riess: I'm sure you can philosophize!
- G.B. Lal: But sweetie, nobody else published it! All I know is the crude fact that I was the one who did. And it was the Examiner who did it. That's all I know. First article about Robinson Jeffers that I remember was mine, about Jeffers, in the Examiner. And we became friends. I went there more than once, in his Tor House. I had lunch with him, all that sort of thing. And you know, this guy Schwab writes to me now that when Robinson Jeffers went to give some talks in the Second World War time, in New York, his wife Una mentioned some people that they wanted to see in New York. My name was in it.
- Riess: This man must think that you are the answer to all of his prayers.
- G.B. Lal: I know, I got so sick of it, I said, "That's the end. This is where the buck stops," or something. But what I'm trying to say is that each one of these has a long yarn in it. Some day, if I get my health straightened out, I will show where it fits into my temperament. It was my interest in literature of a creative nature, of poetry, some ideas.

What were they saying, some new thoughts, men like Sinclair Lewis and Upton Sinclair--I knew both of them very well.



Lal's Interviewing Philosophy

Riess: When you interviewed them, would you ask them what their meaning was, or what kind of--

G.B. Lal: I have no idea of my methods, but they got the results. If you want me--and this is guesswork, please don't think that this is what happened--probably, what happened was that the people got interested if I have any idea to give them too.

In other words, they're willing to talk to somebody who can appreciate something along their line. That's how I broke [in] with science. I went to see Milliken. I was supposed to see him for fifteen minutes, about eleven o'clock. We sat together 'til seven o'clock in the evening, because I could talk physics.

If you don't know their subject, and don't show any kind of interest in something they're doing, why would they bother with you? This is the crude, honest truth. If I didn't have a real, genuine interest in what they were doing, what they were saying, why would they go and talk to me?

Take Theodore Dreiser. He caught on to the fact that I have a scientific turn of mind. Then he asked me lots of questions, "What happened to the human brain. Is anything chemical in it?" I said, "Yes, you take carbon dioxide, you pass out." Or this, or that. Oh, that pleased him very much, because he wanted to be a naturalist. His theme was sex, but in any case, the fact that I could get down to their own talk--you understand? I can talk to socialists, I can talk to anarchists, I can talk to ultra-radicals, I can talk to ultra-conservatives, I can talk to historians. If you don't know, why would they talk with you? That's the simple truth.

Riess: Do you think it was a matter of your very broad education?

G.B. Lal: The university helped me, that's what I'm trying to tell you. Of course it was, I couldn't have survived without it. You'll find me continually reading the latest books. I can't rest content. I hear something, I think of something, I go right out and buy it--like Galbraith's later books.

Riess: You have the inquiring mind.

G.B. Lal: I spend lots of money in books; they're my friends. I get bored to death with talking with idiots, so what the hell to do, I don't drink.

Riess: You make me feel nervous.



G.B. Lal: No, dear, you are a sweetheart. If I go to a clubhouse, I hardly find anybody sweet. People nice, but dumb, no ideas. Somebody wrote a book--Einstein's Brain--and the library [at the Press Club] was excited and bought it. I thought, "I've got to read it," I thought it was a neurological study. I didn't know that anybody published anything on it. I found it was a kind of stupid, sexy novel, an insult to Einstein. I read it through and I put it down. What did I say? "Junk." Or something like that. [laughs]

On Friday, when is it? Next week—I forgot--a talk on Einstein in the Press Club. We're going to have a University of California physicist come, and he'll talk about the physics part of it, and I'm going to talk of my own meeting with Professor Einstein.

Riess: I hope you're going to tape record yourself.

G.B. Lal: I won't record, but if you want to come there, come along.

Riess: You invite me?

G.B. Lal: Of course, gladly.

I'm going to talk of my personal [acquaintance]--I had actually one wonderful two-hour [session] with Einstein all by myself in Germany, before he came to this country. That profoundly impressed me. That's what I say, he's one of the great men I met.

What sense greatness? Because he [was] a cultured man; he wanted to put his science in the framework of human history and civilization; that's what made him great. He was not simply a great scientist, which of course he is, but his kind of great scientist were--if the atom bomb hadn't been, nobody would have known about him. It's a kind of insult to his memory.

You see, dear, I don't interview people, I exchange ideas with them. If I don't have anything to say, they have nothing to say to me. Because they're not really ready for talking to a newspaperman, except when they want publicity for some particular thing they do. Just like the handouts you get from Stanford University over there; somebody does something, then the publicity department makes a story and sends out--that's a very different story.

Riess: When you interviewed, did you take notes?

G.B. Lal: I have no idea what I did. The only time I took notes that I remember was when I interviewed Herbert Hoover. Here was a man, going to be president of the United States, he was visiting here.



G.B. Lal: I go into the Examiner about four o'clock one Friday or something, and the Sunday editor, Mr. Clark, said, "Oh, say, you know? We had a story conference, and Bill Rand, who was the city editor, made a crack at you."

I said, "For heaven's sake, what a compliment, what happened?"

"Well," he said, "Herbert Hoover is here; somebody should get an exclusive interview with him." So Bill said, "The man doesn't give anybody an exclusive interview; maybe Lal will get it." You see, this was a sarcasm.

I said, "Is he important?"

"Oh, my God--next president of the United States!" Remember, Coolidge was still the president.

I say, "Is that important?"

"Oh, you don't understand our country."

I said, "If you insist so much, here's the interview." I had the whole damn thing--written, and in my pocket. I gave it to him.

"My God," he says.

It went all over the United States, New York Times, everywhere, and Hoover became my friend. When he was elected president I was among the guests here eating his food in Palo Alto--in his house.

Riess: Hoover was your friend all of those years?

G.B. Lal: Very nice to me, yes, after this interview. He had my article framed, and hung in the Department of Commerce in Washington. Julius Klein showed it to me.

Riess: People describe him as being an abrupt and difficult man.

G.B. Lal: That's what I'm telling you; I had to prepare myself how to talk to him. I pick up their subject, and actually I prepare for hours before I went to see him.

And then I sprung one little question, and he got excited, and he began to talk; and you know where I took the notes? I had a hard cuff. That's the way I wrote that [off the cuff]; no paper. Now I do all kinds of things. These are my dead selves that you're talking about.

Riess: Yes, I know in a way you don't like to really exhume the past, do you?



G.B. Lal: Oh no, it's like going to a cemetery. I don't like that--there are many reasons for that. First of all, I have no vanity; I have a lot of pride, but no vanity.

Riess: Well, that's a fine distinction.

G.B. Lal: It's an important distinction. I never publicized myself, for the simple reason that everyday I published with my by-line. I go and talk about myself every by-line I write; most of them are subjects I select for my disquisition, so they say something about me. This is the way that I want to get out. The public side of me is the public side of me. It's not the whole of it; that's a man's position. But, bits and bits and bits, like little stinging here, like stinging there, this stinging with my thoughts--just a little bit, so they won't get alarmed.

Riess: So they won't get alarmed, huh?

G.B. Lal: Yeah, they will get alarmed if I tell the whole story, to anybody; if I tell my whole concept of civilization, many of them would jump out and try to murder me; so why take a risk?

Riess: When you started with the Daily News were you working with a by-line?

G.B. Lal: Always. I never wrote anything without a by-line, no.

Riess: What happened to the Daily News?

G.B. Lal: I don't know; they closed it, sold it--merged it with The Bulletin, I think but then I was out of it; all that happened in my absence. I was in New York then, and it changed around.

No, you see, the press organizations are very highly organized things, and individuality and all that kind of thing is very rare there. Because after all, it's like the university: you get the standard textbooks, we have our standard formula. Most of the time we try to see what will get published, and what I call "float along, float along." Then something happens, suddenly I leap at it. That meets my justification. That's a matter of temperament.

#### Some Topics of Current Interest

G.B. Lal: Now just now, I'm tempted to deal with a subject, but I'm hesitating--the argument that there should be sex education for the young people, especially teenagers and so on. And the Planned Parenthood Association people want that.



G.B. Lal: There's also an opposition to that from certain psychiatrists like Saks [?] and so on. And I thought I'd make an article as to what the difference of viewpoint is.

The rightists say, don't make [this] a part of this official system of education, but teach human physiology and anatomy, as a matter of science, knowledge, the whole business. How well the organ operates, how it is made, sex included. Why make it sex education, why don't you make it the whole human biology education.

I thought that's a very good point, but I'm not sure that it's yet ripe for the Examiner. If I don't get in the picture for it, I pass it off.

That often happens. You have to weigh out where you're going. But when something like this happens--my breaking into the physics, and astrophysics, cosmic rays, and the expansion of the universe--I was the first one to put it in a big way in a newspaper in America.

Riess: Well, on the sex thing, who's going to decide?

G.B. Lal: Suppose I turn in the paper, all they do with it is kill it, won't publish it. They will say nothing, but they won't--

Riess: They would kill one of your things?

G.B. Lal: Oh, they kill lots of my articles, yes. So I understand. Gentlemen, polite understanding between us. Sometimes they leap at it and they publish it.

This is not any new discovery of something startling; this is a viewpoint, and full of tension, and emotional--it's from both women's viewpoint, men's viewpoint. I'd like sometime to push myself into some of them--it's a hard job to do. But I'm just trying to tell you: what if some man--suppose Freud comes, or somebody else, I jump into it--the name will carry it, then, you go ahead.

We have all kinds of tricks of the trade. A big name, a new theme, a popularity, either positive or negative--if you murder somebody, that's fine, but [chuckling] if you haven't, that's fine.

Riess: So you're saying that you used your interviewees to get your ideas across, then?

G.B. Lal: Not always, but most of the time. Especially the things I care about. They're all invented; I'm the one who starts ideas, nobody tells me what to do. Very seldom anybody says what to do. If it's reasonable, I'll do it; but very seldom. And mostly I'm the one to push that way.



G.B. Lal: Just now I'm thinking of doing a piece--now I'm not sure whether I should--a thesis about mother's milk, human milk, the best milk. I take up a common theme that it's the best for the little infants.

Now, that part is probably trite, and yet the food industry wants to make artificial formula; they're the ones who want to pooh-pooh it down. Now, a very interesting scientific [fact] comes up, which is, that the longer an animal lives--mammals--the longer the nourishment the baby needs. And this feeding of the breast has a very interesting effect; it acts as a contraceptive.

The explanation how it happens is that the woman's nipple is related to the central nervous system of the brain, and the hormones. So automatically, once the milk lactation starts, this shuts off the gonadotropic hormone. So I thought I'll explain that. Now, whether the idiots will bite it or not, I'm not sure yet. But if the guy who--chiefly propaganda guy in here, then of course then they would, we'd get a picture and blah, blah, blah, blah. That becomes routine. Otherwise they get scared to write.

Now, I don't fight for this too much at all, I want to get down to bigger business of looking at the civilization as a whole. I have published in the Examiner an article called "The New Middle Ages." I have been talking about it more than anybody else, for thirty years or more. And I did publish that about five or six years ago. And I'm going to develop that theme.

Now I hear other people talking that way. Little bits here, little bit there. But I had a different concept of the whole. As I said, we are passing through the Middle Ages of the machines. This is not the Middle Ages, but the Middle Ages of the machine, that's important.

Riess: I don't understand what you mean by that.

G.B. Lal: We are using machines, dear; we now have machines at our command. Still, we have a medieval phase, because the manipulation, the control of the machine, is still authoritarian. So, the benefit to the people generally, the human race, is limited. When we get out of that attitude, through scientific analysis, and better thinking psychologically, we are going to have a very great renaissance, a world-wide renaissance.

I'm in favor of the machine; the issue is how are you going to use it? What purposes? So long as they go on fighting in the old wars, what good [will a] machine do for you? So all of that I wish to weave into my new ideas. This is not any paper that is published, the whole thing, but bits by bits I've published it.



G.B. Lal: I interviewed Linus Pauling, I've got a part of it through. I interviewed Dr. Menninger, I got a lot out of him. All these things I do, knowing perfectly which way I'm going.

Riess: Your editors at the Examiner may be young men who don't understand what you're talking about.

G.B. Lal: If they don't understand, I don't give the copy. It must be lucid, emotional, clear, startling. Otherwise, I'm no writer.

Riess: Lucid, emotional?

G.B. Lal: Yeah. And rational.

Riess: That's tricky.

G.B. Lal: Yes. Unless you give your purpose, you are saying nothing. Unless you put it in language that suddenly excites some feelings in you, you have said nothing. To be dull--a dull reading is a crime in writing.

Riess: So you said, "Lucid, emotional, clear, and startling?"

G.B. Lal: Rational! First of all, rational! The essence of rational, of the structures, and the way of writing, is the business of penetrating right down into emotions. That's where the trickiness lies, to combine the rationality and the emotional.

I wrote an article on the psychology of human emotion--oh, I dug it up myself. I interviewed Stan Laurel, and spent two days with him. I wanted to see Chaplin--he wasn't anymore in the country at that time. So I picked the next best here.

How do you make people laugh? Oh, the true greats are rather really very funny. I noticed that he [Stan Laurel] does everything off-balance. He had a big chair, and he came up. "Come, sit down?" Instead of sitting down, he came obliquely, completely off side, and lifted himself this end, put part of the buttocks here, finally slid into [the chair]. [laughter]

I say, "This is the funniest way to sit in a chair."

He said, "I do these things instinctively."

Riess: He was developing a funny idea all the time?

G.B. Lal: Oh, yes. I said he's a very hard worker. He says, "I have four hundred people helping work on stunts."

##



# scoop



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## August 25th Deadline for Delta Weekend

Club members Tom Moran and Bill Tufford report a lot of interest in this year's Club-sponsored weekend of fishing up in the Delta scheduled for October 2nd, 3rd and 4th. And they suggest you **MAKE RESERVATIONS NOW** if you are interested.

Give the Club desk clerk a list in writing—names, addresses and phone numbers—your own and those of any others who wish to share a houseboat with you on "Press Club Navy's" fun weekend.

Payment need not be made until August 25th which is the deadline for signing up. Any reservation may be cancelled without penalty up until that date. However, say Tom

— See page 4

## Ken Erickson Reception August 14

Reservations are still being accepted for the Friday, August 14th reception toasting PC'er Ken Erickson who has recently been promoted to Western Regional Director of Public Relations for Western Airlines. Ken is commuting back to the Bay Area on weekends from Western's Executive Offices in Los Angeles.

The reception, scheduled for 5:00 p.m., will be held in the Reading Room on the second floor. Charge

— See page 4

## Science for the Layman Library Forum Will Present Gobind Lal

One of the Press Club's most distinguished members, Dr. Gobind Lal, Science Editor Emeritus of the Hearst newspapers and the recipient of a Pulitzer prize for science writing, will be the featured speaker at the third program sponsored by the Library Committee.

Reservations are now being taken for the program which will be held in the Club's Reading Room on Friday, August 7th from 4:30 to 6:00 p.m.

"75 Years Since  $E=MC^2$ " is the intriguing title of the program which Lal will share with a distinguished scientist from the Livermore Radiation Laboratory. An informal discussion will follow the distinguished guest's talks after which wine and



DR. GOBIND B. LAL

cheese will be served.

Admission for members is \$1.00, \$2.00 for non-members and guests. Reservations may be made by calling the front desk. 775-7800.

## Mary Martin Dinner Sure Sell-out

As of this writing, only a few reservations remain for the August 7th "Welcome" dinner honoring America's leading lady of musical theater, Mary Martin.

Miss Martin, one of the Press Club's most distinguished honorary members, will be sharing the dinner spotlight with Jim Hartz, former Today show host, with whom she will co-host KQED's popular "Over Easy" series.

The new series, co-starring Mary and Jim, will premiere Monday, September 28th on the PBS network and will be aired nationally on more than 250 television stations. This marks the fifth season of the "Over Easy" series which explores the personal relationships and changes that we experience as we grow older.

Tony Tiano, General Manager of KQED-Channel 9, will be on hand

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VI A SPEECH TO THE SAN FRANCISCO PRESS CLUB,  
AUGUST 4, 1981

G.B. Lal: Sir, dear friends, fellow members, guests: in case you are unable to hear me, just say so. I'm here to have conversation with you, not to impose any views, not to pretend that I know anything particularly well, but to stimulate our mutual thinking. I'm most proud to come here in response to the librarian and the members.

May I invite you all to my workshop. An old workshop, that is, the Hearst newspaper, where I work, still work after fifty-six years. I would like to show you some things about  $E=MC^2$ . It's a wonderful symbol of lots of things which most of us don't easily grasp. So we should try to unentangle it a little bit.

If you see my old workshop, let me show you something, maybe it will become a little bit clearer as we go along.

Well, it was the year 1926. I was on The Examiner then, right in this city, when there was the Scopes trial that some of you may have heard of--a teacher of the theory of evolution, which was launched by Charles Darwin in England, and came here as it was bound to, and was challenged, and liked, and hated. And finally, there was this young man, an American teacher, in biology or something, and they arrested him for teaching such a vile doctrine as the theory of evolution.

I begin with this thing because it challenged me. I was at that time not able to attend the Scopes trial, as some of my colleagues did, because I was lying in hospital after an automobile accident on Mason and Geary, of all places.

But I was very much excited. I said, "Well, I'll have to do something about this business too, when I get up." Nothing happened for some time. I was doing all kinds of other writing, when finally they gave me a week's vacation.



Millikan and  $E=MC^2$

G.B. Lal: I went down to Los Angeles. Most of the days I spent there at the motion picture studios as the drama editor of the Los Angeles Examiner, one of my colleagues, took me around to every studio and introduced me to movie girls, and I saw Valentino making sheik pictures, under Griffith's direction--I still remember that. "Sheik" was a very tempting name in those days.

Just before I was about to return to San Francisco, I said, "Well, let me go down and visit the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena." You can picture about four o'clock in the afternoon, just about this time, and I am down there, and I'm poking around, I saw a scientist--a young scientist, who became very famous afterwards, Dr. Ira Bone--taking some gadgets out of an old box.

I said, "What are these?"

"Well," he said, "these are two cosmic ray electroscopes."

"What on earth is cosmic rays, and what is an electroscope?" He told me a little about it. So I said, "I want to interview and write about it."

"Oh no, you can't do it. This is Dr. Milliken's work, and you have to wait until he comes back."

I said, "Where is he?"

"Well, he's in London, he's talking with the Royal Society there."

So I came back, and I said, "Well, there's no story for The Examiner in it, neither murder, nor rape, nor anything nice like that" [audience laughs]--you need some juicy thing to sell the paper with. Still, I couldn't shake off that thing out of my head.

And so, one day I learned that the great scientist was back in Pasadena, and impulsively I sent him a wire. I was quite new and green in those days on The Examiner; I didn't realize how offensive it is to the powers-that-be that somebody goes and takes a step like that without asking them. Well, I did. It was on Thursday I sent the wire, and next morning I got a telegram from Dr. Milliken's secretary: "Your appointment with Dr. Milliken--Monday, eleven o'clock."



G.B. Lal: I took that to the managing editor, who was Mr. Eric Cuddinwall, a very well-known personality here, and probably some of you must have known him. He said, "What's there, Gobind?"

"Well," I said, "this is a very great man and a very great story, and you ought to have it before anybody else has it."

"I see. You know, we publish the paper for ninety-five percent of the families in the Bay region; they never heard of Milliken, and they don't know who it is, and what's this with the cosmic rays? Nobody knows."

I said, "Well, I have promised them."

"Oh, you want to go?"

"I want to go."

"Okay, go."

So I said, "They give me a small salary, but I'll have to forfeit it--I'll pay it myself." I took the night train and I was there punctually at eleven o'clock. Milliken's secretary said to me, "The president of Yale University, Dr. Angell, is waiting for lunch with Dr. Milliken, so kindly don't take more than fifteen minutes or twenty minutes of his time." Oh, I said, "Fifteen minutes is quite enough."

We sat together, Milliken and I, up to about six-thirty in the evening. There was no lunch, either for him or for me. Now, how did that happen? Because I'd already heard of Einstein's equation,  $E=MC^2$ . So I said, "When I studied physics, matter was matter, energy was energy, and the two were independent things. Now, what on earth is this new idea that they're one?"--that's what the equation means. Well, this happened to be the key to the explanation of cosmic rays, too; that's why I'm bringing that in. Oh, I got a depth of understanding, very important, fascinating business, eye-opening. "What does it mean?"

An eight-year-old child was told in San Francisco to write an essay on Einstein. So his father brought him to me--a lawyer, a very dear friend of mine. He said, "Lal, help him to explain Einstein's theory of relativity,  $E=MC^2$  or something like that." I said, "All right, you sit down kiddie; I'll explain it to you."

I said, "Suppose you have--this is your lamp--" It was lighted. "Isn't that a lamp, stands here?"

"Yes."



G.B. Lal: "Doesn't work. You see it?"

"Yes."

"But does it come to you?"

"No."

"But you still see it?"

"Yes."

"You pull the cord, and light bursts out--how do you like that? How does it happen that light comes to you, so far?" I said, "Light is something called energy, and it goes and spreads out. It's a kind of spreading energy, not tightly laced at one point. The lamp, that doesn't come to you, does it?"

"No."

"Well, we call that matter. For a long, long time it was believed that the lamp was something quite different--any material thing, like your body, like this, like that, that's all matter. The astronauts who went to the moon, they were lumps of matter, that's matter. It has weight, it has a shape, it has a definite form, length, breadth, height, and what we call weight, called 'mass.' (It's a technical word--the scientists, they don't call it matter--sometimes they do--it's called 'mass.' All right, this is mass.)

But this thing, light--that's spread all over, comes from the sun, from stars. That's a spreading thing, that's not limited to place. So this was called energy. This was old stuff.

Einstein made the discovery, and he said, "Matter is frozen energy. And energy is unfrozen matter." Well, as a crude example, take a lump of ice, which is solid--it has a dimension, you can take it, you can hit somebody in the head with it. Then you heat it a little, it becomes fluid, finally it becomes a gas, finally becomes steam, and goes all over. Something like that happens.

What then is the--how much matter can we change into how much radiant energy, or any kind of energy? And energy is a very tricky word--I'll come down to it--it doesn't matter, we talked about Einstein. Now, I was talking with Dr. Milliken.

So the long and short of the matter was that Einstein's equation helped to understand how cosmic rays were formed in space. Well, what on earth are cosmic rays? You may not be conscious of it, but billions and billions of cosmic rays at this very moment



G.B. Lal: are passing through your body, right down through you. They're coming out, not from the sun, not from these stars, but nobody knows from where. From all directions, day and night. And they are the most energetic, most powerful, high-speed kind of forms of matter--whatever they are--that scientists still have not understood how.

These cosmic rays were the thing that Professor Milliken explained in this way: that in space, small atoms of lightweight material things, like hydrogen, click together, become welded, and part of their material turns into energy, and that's where the cosmic rays work.

[following paragraph is as transcribed] All right, so I learned a good deal lesson about Einstein's  $E=MC^2$ , I wanted to follow many of the cosmic rays. Milliken was very kind, and he introduced me to the great astronomers of the Mt. Wilson Observatory, which was home of the 100-inch telescope, the largest, most powerful light telescope up to that time.

There I spent the day with the great astronomers. But one particularly was very important, and that was Dr. Edwin P. Hubble, "Major Hubble," they used to call him. But Dr. Hubble had made the discovery of what now everybody talks about, the expansion of the universe.

What's the universe, and what did they mean by expansion? Well, just as we're sitting in this room--let us say this is the universe. Each one of us is a milky way system. Each one is a fleet of a hundred billion to two hundred billion suns, we call them stars. So altogether, united as we are, that's the universe. What was happening was that these various universes--with the photograph, by the hundred-inch telescope--seemed to be running away from each other, as though something nasty has suddenly come here, and we're all running in every direction we can. This was the kind of thing happening to the poor universe; it was expanding in all directions.

All that also had to be explained by Einstein's theory of space and time. So then we worked into Einstein from a different angle. I won't take more of your time--but to show you two of these experiences, let's move quickly to Einstein.

(Well, I forgot about Einstein after Mr. Hearst ordered that my article on this subject be published in all the Hearst papers, and it went all over the country. One consequence of that was another trouble for me.)



Cancer Research

G.B. Lal: One day [I was telephoned by] a very prominent medical man of this city, Dr. Walter B. Coffey, who was the chief medical director of the entire Southern Pacific Railroad system--there were several hundred doctors all along the line who worked under him. He was a very powerful man, and he was the chief surgeon also of St. Francis Hospital here.

Well, he had read my article, and he telephoned to me to come and see him. That was late in 1929, November, just after the Great Depression began to burst upon the country, not a very pleasant time, but I went to see him. He said, "I have got some work on cancer research which I will not reveal to anybody except to you."

Well, I was rather flattered, as any newspaperman would be, but I didn't quite understand why it was important. So I said, "Okay." I heard, I wrote the article, and I said, "You correct it, you personally."

I brought it to the publisher of the Examiner, my friend Clarence Lindner. He jumped, "My God! We are going to give it two pages, full, on Sunday. That's a great story." They all believed in Dr. Coffey. If he says so, it's so.

The story was a new biochemical explanation of cancer, a new theory. Just as in diabetes there is supposed to be a deficiency of the pancreas hormone, insulin, so in the case of cancer probably there is a deficiency of one or more hormones of the adreno-cortical gland, right here, on both sides of the kidneys--a tiny little thing like the lima bean, they stick there. They produce, God knows, twenty, thirty different kinds of hormones. A very important little gadget to the body.

This was a new approach, and it meant biochemical research was needed on a very large scale, either to prove it or disprove it or develop the theory, whatever it was. They had treated some patients, and found some results which were spectacular; cancer seemed to dissolve in some patients, the pain was gone, and so on. And these were all hopeless cases.

Well, the story was to be published on Sunday, and the publisher here sent out a wire to all Hearst newspapers, and the Hearst syndicate, International News Service: "The Lal story on cancer copy coming on Sunday." But Mr. Hearst had ordered that nothing about cancer be published in any of his newspapers, until somebody makes a discovery and prove one thousand cases at least have been completely cured. He doesn't want cancer mentioned.



G.B. Lal: This was the attitude of most all newspapers in this country. Therefore, the cancer research business was being held back. There were no funds for it.

And here was the point: who would disobey Mr. Hearst? So, Saturday morning I got a telegram: "Lal story not to be published. I don't want people to get false hopes up." Well, this was his order, so they stopped it. I said, "This is interference with freedom of the press!" (I was so young, I didn't have sense enough to know that you can't defy the great chief.)

I said, "Don't worry. I'll get it in." Well, honest to God, the top ten most prominent medical scientists and physicians of this region, including Herbert Evans of the University of California, the discoverer of pituitary hormone, and all that sort of thing, Langley Porter, Karl Meyer, people of great importance, Schmidt, Dean of Medicine at the University of California Medical Project, Rexford, Stanford University, they all wrote to Mr. Hearst that this story should be published by the Examiner, it will bring great credit, and will help in cancer research, which has been blocked. So he ordered it published, no big spectacle, published moderately, I think it was January 31st, in 1930, when the Depression was already on.

It was like exploding a bomb. Everybody in the world published it--published in England, published in France, published all over the country--and the newspapers were absolutely mad. They cursed me. I must have done some kind of dirty trick to get an exclusive story. Why did I get it alone? And Morris Fishbein, editor of the Journal of American Medical Associations, he was burnt up, because he wanted to publish the story in the Journal first. "You don't give it to a lay-paper," this kind of business. "What on earth is going on?"

So Dr. Coffey said, "I'm going to answer this," and he organized a meeting, in Del Monte somewhere. Hundreds of these top doctors of northern California were there. And he said, "I am proud to have been published by The Examiner, accurately, correctly, just the way I told him." That was a big support to me, and Mr. Hearst was so pleased with the way the story was handled that he gave me an award of five hundred dollars, which was a lot of money in those days--raised my salary, and then decided to--oh yes, something else happened: this story immediately excited the Senate of the United States. They held a sub-committee meeting, and both these doctors were asked to go there, and I was sent out with them.

So there was a big session, right in Washington, the Senate--it was a big affair. [laughing] And I still remember my friend, H.L. Mencken, who lived in Maryland, who asked me to come over and have dinner with him. He said, "What brings you here?"



G.B. Lal: I said, "I came with the--"

"Oh, with those damn cancer quacks."

I said, "Yes, cancer quacks."

Anyway, all the great doctors of the East ganged up against him [Coffey] and the chief surgeon, professor of surgery--I won't mention the name--from Johns Hopkins University said, "Lal, you lost me a case of ten thousand dollars. I was going to operate a woman, she wouldn't be, she wanted to go back to California."

"I am very sorry, doctor. I am no financier, I don't know how to write checks, anyhow."

And Mr. Hearst then transferred me, in 1930, to New York, as has been told. Now I'll take you to enter my workshop affair.

#### Lawrence's Cyclotron

G.B. Lal: Just about the end of this 1930, December, or 1st of January '31, there was a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in New Orleans. As a science editor, I had to go there. Three of us from New York--all three close friends and collaborators--Howard Blakesle of the Associated Press, William Laurence, science news editor of the New York Times, and I, we were invited by two young scientists from California to come to their room in the French quarters, and they explained something to us which was very new.

Who were they? Ernest Orlando Lawrence was one of them, the man who invented the cyclotron, and J. Robert Oppenheimer, both together, they were the same age. Both were to be famous on the tail of  $E=MC^2$ .

What had they done? Dr. Lawrence said that he had devised this little cyclotron which can produce high-speed protons, which are tiny particles in the core of the atoms, charged with positive electricity. Our body's full of them; we couldn't stand here without them.

So, "How much voltage or speed have you achieved?"

"Up to two thousand; but we go right down [sic] to millions."

"What are you waiting for."



G.B. Lal: "Well, we need a big magnet. This little gadget we tried in my own kitchen, it was a little side [sic] kind of job. We need a very powerful magnet to make those things rotate and rotate."

"Why don't you get it?"

"Where would you get it, the university has no money, everybody's broke, a hard time to get a big magnet."

We published this article, and it had some effect upon his getting the 84-ton magnet because the government of China, one of the governments which toppled over quite often in those days, had ordered from America a giant magnet for communications, whatever it was. So they gave it to him, gave it to Dr. Lawrence.

I needn't tell you that we were in his favor; he became one of my great admirers and friends. Dr. Lawrence's gadget had  $E=MC^2$  business right in it. When these particles go round and round, as they increase in speed--the more speed, the higher is the energy, that's what they're trying to do--their weight increases. That's where Einstein comes in: why does the weight increase? If you sit still, you have a certain weight; but if you go and do jogging, your weight will increase. What is there to increase about--where does the increase come from?

That comes from motion. When you add motion to anything, motion is of course a source of energy, one of the most primary forms of energy, it will increase weight. Of course, in the case of a human being jogging, the increase is so little it hardly matters. But when you are having little tiny particles going around billions and billions of times, they become more and more heavy, and therefore the gadget has to have more in pushing these magnetic forces and all the gadgets in them.

So again we get into Einstein. Pretty soon Einstein himself came to New York City, some time in 1931. And of course every reporter in the country was after him, we all ganged up. But there was one ceremony held at the city hall. He was given the keys of the city of New York. And they were presented by the mayor, who at that time happened to be Mr. James Walker, the famous Jimmy Walker.

Well, the ceremony was held in the city hall, I went down there exactly sharp, punctually at twelve o'clock. The band was there. All kinds of things going on. Professor Einstein and Madam Einstein came in, very formally dressed, in European diplomatic style, long coat and everything, big orchids on Madam Einstein. Only one thing missing: the mayor. He was not there, five minutes go, ten minutes pass, half an hour pass. Finally,



G.B. Lal: he slipped in with his hands like that, looks around, Einstein still standing at the platform, his wife standing there, changing their feet getting tired. Then the band stopped playing.

The mayor came. He said, "Professor Einstein, long before you discovered that the universe is round, we had made the discovery in this city hall that the affairs of the city keep going round and round in circles." I saw Einstein burst out and laugh, laugh--so did his wife. That was a comedy. Never to forget, Einstein enjoyed jokes.

### An Interview with Einstein

G.B. Lal: Just a year or so later, in September 1932, I said I must go and interview Einstein and some other people in England, France and Germany. So I took a month's vacation, and flew to London. From London I took a plane to Berlin and I went to the foreign office there; I had introductions for them. I said, "Will you kindly enable me to meet Einstein?" He said, "Oh, forget Einstein. You Americans write about Einstein: if he sneezes you write about Einstein, if he takes a bath you write about Einstein. You won't find out Einstein, but there are lots of great scientists here, I will help you meet them." Well, I might meet the other scientists, but I still wanted Einstein.

Finally I managed to get an appointment. He was staying in his summer home, called Caputh, about ten miles from Potsdam. A few miles from Berlin, from Potsdam, and he went there. My appointment was about eleven o'clock on Saturday morning. But this German taxi boy whom I hired, I said, "Now don't delay me, be punctual." And this was about nine o'clock I hired him. "I want to reach there just eleven o'clock punctually, and you bring me back to the station here."

"Eleven marks."

I said, "Eleven marks you will have twice."

Well, in a few minutes he arrived there. Now, that was a German old town, and everybody keeps terrible dogs there. This quiet Saturday morning the dogs began to bawl, howl, it was a cannonade, everybody was startled, and Mrs. Einstein came out from her house towards the garden to see what on earth happened.

I got out, and I said, "I'm very sorry."



G.B. Lal: "It is only nine o'clock." But she said, "All right." She was in a nightgown. "The professor has had breakfast, but he hasn't dressed up yet. Maybe he'll see you." [end of taping at Press Club]

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## VII ON SCIENCE AND THE MEN WHO DO SCIENCE

[Interview 3: September 4, 1981]

Quantum Mechanics and Complementarity

G.B. Lal: Albert Einstein has said--that he does believe in causality, but he cannot prove it. An experiment or proof of it is not available. In other words, what he said was that he personally believed in it. A strict chain of events, one event leading to another, a scientific faith.

Max Planck also said the same thing to me. Both of those giants of German science said that; but both of them said the proving of that is not possible, because the experiments that would determine it--in small atomic size, sub-atomic particles--would require the determination of the position of an atom as well as the momentum, or rate with which it's moving, to be measured together. And that can't be done. Either you get one or the other, and it disturbs it.

So that's why they had to go and devise other methods, like Heisenberg's, and what they call quantum mechanics, and things like that--shorting [?] of the equations, there's a lot of argument about it. But Einstein didn't like that; in fact, he used to argue with Niels Bohr. He said that you reduce the phenomena to a kind of gambling, with statistical proof.

In other words, you can make a prediction about more than one particle. As soon as two particles come, predictability increases enormously. But you can't do that with one. It's the statistical measurement that they accept, that's what they call quantum theory. And Einstein didn't like that. So that was his preference.

Riess: I don't really want to have a conversation that has to do with quantum theory.



G.B. Lal: The long and the short of it [is] that here, Einstein plays a very important part. The situation is best illustrated by the nature of light.

As you heat a body in an oven, or something, in a closed ball of some kind, and you raise the temperature continuously, you will expect that the rays of light that come out, as a result of heating--let us say, a piece of iron, or something--will be continuously and systematically increasing in energy, of frequency--you know, the number of vibrations. The greater the number of vibrations, the higher the energy.

This is what happened: this is what Planck discovered, that they come by jumps. In other words, there will be one oscillation, so many periods per second, for light energy, and the next thing you know it, the next step up. No continuity, it suddenly jumps up to a different color. That means that there is jumping. This is what they mean by quantum, a leap. Energy is absorbed by the atom and emitted by the atom in certain quantities, packets. That's a quantum, it's a packet, a bunch, like chewing-gum packets. You get only one size, but you don't get the in-between size. Or the money: you get one cent, but you can't get one-third of a cent from any bank; they don't make it. That's what it means, quantum means a packet.

So Einstein was the one who actually stated that the emission and absorption of energy, brilliant energy, let us say, because the easiest thing is about light, is not continuous but in packets. And that is the basis of photo-electrical gadgets, all of them. As you enter the door, it opens by itself and all that? That entirely depends on a particular wavelength that operates.

Electricity is released out of any certain kind of substances, like selenium, but always in particular wavelengths, not continuously. That's quantum theory.

Riess: Good.

G.B. Lal: And this is related to statistics. If there are a number of small particles, heaps of them, the more the crowd, the surer becomes prediction, because statistically they can tell. It's a little like saying how many persons per hundred thousand of the population would die in a certain year of such and such disease. But you can't predict which particular person would die. That is the relationship between statistical prediction and quantum theory. So the quanta are considered as packages of certain types of individuals.



G.B. Lal: And there's a very interesting thing there. Niels Bohr, who used to argue with Einstein--they had a lot of fights--he said, let us talk of light, a simple thing to illustrate. A light sometimes acts as though it consists of little tiny bullets of particles, separate. Or corpuscles, they called them. Einstein is the one who gave the name to the atom of light, called it a photon. Light particle. But sometimes it comes out as waves. Waves are a continuous thing, they are not concentrated in one place. How can the same thing be both?

Bohrs said there is a complementarity, that in order to fully describe reality in these matters, you have to say the one aspect is wave, the other is particle, and they are thus complementary to each other in order to make full statements. And he carried that out through kinds of ideas, including ethics and morals. Various cultures would have different kinds of truths, so to speak, and they can be complementary. It's a very elaborate theory of his.

Riess: Is that usual, to have such philosopher-scientists?

G.B. Lal: The great scientists of Germany, especially coming out of the University of Göttingen in Germany in the 1920s, particularly since 1924 or so, were remarkable men. They were mathematicians pure and simple, as well as physicists. And the combination--it's the business of the mathematician to be a philosopher, because the mathematician is not tied up with actually what you observe, but by the inter-relationships of mathematics to mathematics. Two plus two is four. Now, this doesn't tell you two what. If you've got two apples, and two oranges, then there are four fruit. The fruit is an abstraction. But apples and oranges are not abstractions. You can't multiply apples and oranges, that makes no sense.

The scientist who observes the facts, phenomena, reality, count [?] with the senses. He goes in one line, so to speak, as a mathematician creates numerous keys, some of which will help to open the key of reality, and some will just remain a relationship to please him like an artist.

So there is a very great relationship between--now John von Neumann, whose books are right here, he and Norbert Wiener are both mathematicians and physicists, very great, and Einstein certainly was. Relativity, and his doctrine of the constancy of light--the speed of light in a vacuum is always the same--where did he get that? He thought it out himself, he created that.

Riess: Can you generalize about how much of it he needed to bounce off somebody like Niels Bohr. Could he create it all in his head or did he need the give and take?



G.B. Lal: Science is not finished, it just goes on. Sometimes one [thing] gets accepted as especially the most helpful thing to work with, sometimes the other. Different kinds of temperaments have different kinds of approaches. Now, people interested in music--and Dr. Einstein was--often are mathematically inclined, perhaps because they have measure, rhythm, whatever you call them.

The other scientists--Dr. [Albert A.] Michelson, he was a painter, and he was enormously interested in light. I talked to him, of course, and his outlook was of a painter's. [He did] very meticulous measurements. He was not a theoretical man, but he measured whether there is such a thing as ether drift, which was the basis of changing Einstein's ideas.

### Measurement, and Ether Drift

Riess: What kind of drift? What was the expression you used?

G.B. Lal: I'm glad you mentioned that: "ether drift." [spells ether] Now, what on earth is ether? The idea, the word has changed many times, as Einstein pointed out, but the long and short was that in the nineteenth century particularly, after the British school of thinkers like Faraday, and his disciple Maxwell--they had an idea that all space is filled with something they called "ether," a new kind of matter, which was different from the ordinary three states of matter we call solid, liquid and gas.

This was something which penetrates every bit of matter itself. And yet it consists of tiny particles, some very incredibly subtle particles which nobody was able to identify; it was an assumption. This became a very important thing for scientists studying the laws of nature. If everything is filled by this ocean of ether, why not measure all kinds of motion relative to this? So you've got an absolute standard, because all measurements that we make are with relative things, chains and so forth. They don't have a universal standard with which to measure the speed of everything.

If you could measure the motion of everything in regard to ether, which remains, so to speak, steady itself, like a platform, in nature, that you can measure the speeds of all the trains relative to the platform which is supposed to be at rest. This ether was supposed to be standing still, and yet a kind of thing through which everything passes. They wanted to measure, does such a thing exist experimentally? It was assumed it does. It was assumed that light, for example, is nothing but the vibration of ether. This was one theory. The other was that it consists of little particles. But there's no air in space, so how does



G.B. Lal: light come from stars, faraway suns, in a vacuum? The ether waves come up. An ether wave moves and transfers light like water waves, a kind of ocean.

Well, let's measure it. So Michelson and Morley, two scientists in Cleveland, they made [in 1887] an experiment which should have detected ether, in this way: they measured what happens to rays of light, on earth, as the earth goes around the sun, and also as it rotates on its own axis. They put two kinds of light in such a way that if there was an ether, it would be detected. Let me explain how.

Suppose you have a stream running, water, anything you want, and there's a swimmer who, let us assume, swims across the river, or the stream, which is flowing, one mile back and forth, across the river. But also one mile up and down the stream. But you see, there will be a difference in time. That crossing up and down and going against the stream and back again, the same distance, will not be in the same time. It takes a little longer to swim upstream and then back than right across the river.

That particular difference would tell whether there is a stream. That's what they were trying to measure. Well, they found the calculated difference which was expected didn't turn up; it wasn't there. This was the famous Michelson experiment. Einstein refers to it later on.

Einstein also figured out, it's a funny kind of ether, because how do planets move through it? It has to have elasticity as great as steel, greater. [following is as it was transcribed] So one way to the wind, and other way to hard, they couldn't figure out to do with it, so he said, "Well, I'll get down the whole damn business quite a different way." So he just changed the methods of measurement themselves, relationship of time and space. He became geometrical, and that's the theory of relativity.

The point I was making is there are two different approaches. He doesn't say there's no ether; he simply says that all the names up to this time used don't make sense. He still admits there may be some different kind of ether, but he called it space-time, that's the fourth dimension. Fourth dimension means, of course, if you have a body, any kind of rigid body—like a tube of iron, something—it has length and breadth and height, doesn't it? Those are the three dimensions of space. The fourth dimension is not only where, but when. His point was that as time changes, according to the movement of the sides [?], at two-o'clock by our reckoning it will not be two o'clock on the sun, because there's much more matter there, and that modifies the time, makes it slower.



G.B. Lal: What Einstein was trying to do was to measure events, not objects but happenings of nature. He said there is an intimate relationship between the substance and the time. In other words, the three dimensions of the rigid measuring rod, and one of the clock. The clock and the rod were combined by him. That is the meaning of relativity broadly speaking.



## VIII THE SCIENCE WRITERS AND THE SCIENTISTS

Riess: Now let me ask you something: in terms of your role in all of this, as an interpreter of these principles and theories, the analogy of the swimmer and the stream, is that yours, or is that the scientists'?

G.B. Lal: No, no, that's the scientists'.

Riess: That's the way the scientists conceptualized it?

G.B. Lal: They told me and others like that. Of course, we tried to put it in as simple baby language as possible which is a hell of a job to do. But we tried our best. When I interviewed Michelson, I tried to put it that way, as much of it as I could. We paraphrase. We don't quote them.

Riess: Were the scientists very interested in the project of making their work acceptable to the general population?

G.B. Lal: What I found by my experience, dear, was that they all wanted it to get known, but there were certain things which held them back. One was that some of them were very sensitive that they were not misquoted, not misinterpreted. They were very fussy about that, and I don't blame them.

Another was that they didn't want to be blamed by their colleagues as seekers of publicity. Now this has changed, because they all are asking for publicity. In those days, scientists especially were university people, academic people, all supported by some foundation like the Rockefeller, or Carnegie. And they were not supposed to seek publicity; that was considered beneath contempt for them.





Gobind Behari Lal, May 1937. Caption:  
"New York--Gobind Behari Lal, Science  
Editor of the New York American and of  
Universal Service, who won the Pulitzer  
Prize for his excellent reportorial  
work." International News photo.



Forty years later, February 1979  
photograph of Lal. Examiner photo.







NASW and Questions for Einstein

G.B. Lal: We had to meet this difficulty, and in overcoming this, I must say this country seems to have been the leader, particularly when a few of us organized what they called the National Association of Science Writers.

Riess: Watch out, watch out, ooo, ooo! Let me--[interruption in tape]

G.B. Lal: Oh, I'm sorry, I got unhooked. [gets up, comes back with publication]

Riess: So by organizing you had a context in which to discuss the principles, or what?

G.B. Lal: No, what we did was, we were able to win the confidence of the scientists. They trusted the members of this organization, because we were very careful selecting them.

You'll find that among the life members [looking at NASW publication], earliest life members, I'm one of them mentioned, here. It was 1934 when the organization started, and of that group only four of us are left alive, at least the last publication when that had happened. I'm a member here.

Riess: Did you start the group?

G.B. Lal: I was one of ten or eleven who founded it. [Sept. 16, 1934] Others are dead: William L. Laurence, Waldemar Kaempffert, New York Times, Watson Davis of Science Service, Robert Potter of Science Service.

Riess: What were the circumstances of your forming this group?

G.B. Lal: I wasn't particularly interested in that, but my colleagues William Laurence, and Robert Potter, and I think David Dietz, they got interested. Their reasoning was that it may stabilize our profession. They wanted status for our jobs, security, some people who trust us, the scientists would trust us, and the editor would think well of us. So instead of joining the [Newspaper] Guild, which was a different matter, we thought we would organize ourselves to win the trust both of the publishers with whom we had to deal, and the scientists with whom we had to deal. Later that became a very important organization, of course, all kinds of people in it.

Riess: And the organization meets and discusses issues?



G.B. Lal: Oh, it's a continuous affair, yes, it has headquarters somewhere in New York. I've got the address of the secretary.

The members are in various categories, full-time workers; we have this kind of member, that kind of member, coordinator, whatever.

Riess: And if somebody publishes something in bad faith or incorrect would they be chastized, or in some way--

G.B. Lal: If necessary, we'll throw them out, oh yes.

Riess: Have there ever been issues over the years?

G.B. Lal: I haven't paid attention to it myself. In fact--I'm already an honorary life member, I've got a certificate up there. I don't bother with it.

Riess: Yes. You're saying that this organization helped. Well, my basic question was, how interested the scientists themselves were.

G.B. Lal: The scientists began to trust us. Particularly its importance was brought out at a meeting of Harvard University in 1936, when five of us members, founders of this organization, received a joint Pulitzer prize. This put us at a very high level. I've got letters from the trustees of this great organization thanking me, Harvard University letter, everybody; they thought we did such a hell of a good job, interpreting an abstruse and difficult subject for a whole month--they put a big status to it.

Even before that--let me give an example of dealing with Einstein through this organization. Einstein was presented a new statement about his famous formula,  $E=MC^2$ , at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Pittsburgh, which is held towards the end of the year. And he was to speak there before the section of mathematics.

Well, we were all there--the science writers from New York, particularly, and Washington, were there. The question was, how on earth to write such a story, when he talked with the mathematical section? We would go there, to the open meeting, but who would understand? We wanted to talk with him ahead of time, to make something worthwhile.

So we pressed Austin Clark, who was the executive technically of the American Association for the Advancement of Science at that time--he was a member of the Smithsonian Institution, himself a scientist--to get a special talk with Einstein before he lectured, which was to come at four o'clock in the afternoon, one day.



G.B. Lal: Well, fortunately Bill Laurence, John O'Neill of the Tribune, and Howard Blakesle and I were staying in the same hotel in Pittsburgh. About eleven o'clock at night Austin Clark put a paper in our rooms under the sill that Einstein would be willing to give us an interview, nine o'clock in the morning, in the home of a businessman, Mr. Spear or something, staying in Pittsburgh.

So I invited John O'Neill of the Herald Tribune, and Bill Laurence, to come to my room, and work out a number of questions to be put in writing to the doctor.

Well, I tell you, we sat 'til three o'clock in the morning hashing out what to ask him. John O'Neill had about twenty-six questions. I said, "You're crazy, he can't talk like that." Finally we got down to three or four questions, including--one of them was, whether it would be practical to convert matter into energy for use. Another was the problem of causality. Another was a question of unified-field theory, whether gravitation and electricity had been successfully united in a single theory or not. About three or four questions like that, including--I told you--uncertainty principles, whether causality exists or not.

So, on a piece of paper, a little stationery, we type-wrote it. And we said, "We speak as members of the NASW, the National Association of Science Writers"--which had just been founded. We put it down at three in the morning. I took this paper to breakfast and got a couple of other fellows, like Watson Davis, and some other scientists too, they all signed it.

So I took this letter, and I gave it to Dr. Robertson, who was a famous astrophysicist at California Institute of Technology, and a pretty close friend of Einstein--and Einstein was escorted by him to this place of meeting, I forget where it was. I think it was where he was staying.

Well, there must have been a horde of other newspapermen, fifty or more, and they all crowded in, couldn't keep them out. So I gave this letter to Professor Robertson, and Robertson gave it to Einstein, and he said to us, "These are good questions, and I'm going to answer them."

Well, this started about nine o'clock, and until one o'clock he talked this matter. The other people were--

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G.B. Lal: [Lal talking about other reporters questions to Einstein] Einstein said, "Yes I can, but not to you." He wanted to ask him how he liked American girls, things like that.



G.B. Lal: Well, the result was, the same afternoon, after four o'clock, with this material already in our hands--we had just about written down our story--we went down to hear his talk, and took his photograph, all kinds of things. And next day all the papers came out with Einstein's explanations, because we put them on the wire right off. And he was so pleased that he came in a limousine next morning to see us over at the hotel, and thanked us. That was a triumph.

Riess: Yes, that was. That belies my idea of how reporting is usually done.

G.B. Lal: Well, this is what happened. You see, we argued, and my God--just only a few of us. And we always--in Harvard, too, we five stuck together, and we decided what to put. Why that five? For a simple reason. There were two syndicates: the Associated Press, and the International News Service. I represented the International News Service, and Howard Blakesle represented the A.P. These were, of course, all over the country, syndicates. In addition to the men representing syndicated features, the New York Times was represented by Bill Laurence, Herald Tribune by John O'Neill, and David Dietz from the Scripps-Howard papers. So we figured that we are the ones who served most papers, and we decided to stick together.

### The "Supreme Court of Science"

G.B. Lal: Every morning we decided what story to ask and what to do. On one occasion, there was no big program in these meetings--nothing of importance, one day, that seemed to come out. So we said, let us create a story. This meeting was supposed to be held to bring knowledge together, the unity of knowledge. But there was no unity; mathematicians talk mathematics, anthropologists talk anthropology, everybody talks their own specialty and there are no meetings of minds. We will create it.

So I made the suggestion, which all of us accepted, let us ask some of the picked people here whether they would like to have a supreme court of science established to pass judgments on controversial issues.

Particularly on my mind was the question of racism in Germany. German philosophers were saying there are two kinds of science, Aryan science and Jewish science, and such things. All the awful mess of racism, still goes on. All right, have you got any basis to it? What do you think? And these should be top people of the world along these lines, the top men of the world, supreme court of science.



G.B. Lal: We appointed Bill Laurence, who knew James Bryant Conant very well, to go up and talk to him. He [Conant] said it's a hell of a good idea, but I can't ask them directly, because they're my guests.

Well, the dean of the graduate school, Dr. Gerhardt, [?] a great mathematician, he was appointed to help us in picking out the people who would contribute. I remember some of them. Let's see, who were they: John Dewey was one of them; Hu Shih, a Chinese ambassador, and a philosopher, he was there; [Bronislaw] Malinowski, the famous anthropologist, was interviewed; [Alfred] North Whitehead was interviewed; a man I think by the name of [Etienne] Gilson, he was a historian or something.

Anyway, we had about five or six of the supposed to be top philosophers, thinkers of the time. Each one of them endorsed the idea as magnificent, and we took those words, and put them on the wire. I think that had more to do than anything else to impress these Harvard people. The whole country published, "supreme court of science."

Now, to tell you the funny part of it: the Bureau of Standards had the record of that somewheres. Another man, as a technologist, and a scientist, in Boston, came out with this business about four or five years ago, that we should have a supreme court of science. Well, I wrote to the Bureau of Standards and I said, this is our idea, we put it out first. And they sent us the background of it, endorsing it.

The same man was here at a meeting of AAAS or something, and when I told him about it he was terribly interested; he said he'd never heard of it and he would like me to give [him] all the information! [chuckles]

Riess: But there was never any real energy to put it together?

G.B. Lal: No, they said scientists would not stand for that kind of thing; they don't want any authoritarianism, somebody passing judgment. Well, that's not the point. What I'm trying to say is that if it were not for our collaboration, we couldn't have done such a thing.

I'm talking about the fact that we devised here a method by which were we not only [not] cutting each other's throats--as all reporters do--but instead of that, collaborating in certain ways, in a big way.

Riess: Do you think that there was envy of the five of you?



G.B. Lal: Oh, burnt up, everybody was burnt up, why the hell they didn't get any honors, all that, it was a great mess. But that's not our business. We were invited to the University of Chicago, we were invited to Union College in Schenectady--I did so many talks.

I believed--as you've already got--in making science a culture for the people; I really believe in it, damn thing of it. I don't get money out of that. But I fully believe that we need a rational viewpoint; and I consider that, as science exists, it's very limited. But we have to go ahead with it, and create not only the various disciplines separately, but the publicity about it. Otherwise, you have a very great difficulty; the science is misused.

Riess: Well, now, there must have been times as a science writer that you feel that you've been actually used, your interpretation, or abused.

G.B. Lal: Oh, I had one or two difficult things; but they're not much. I got along all right with scientists, and sometimes with editors.

Riess: Pardon me?

G.B. Lal: I said: sometimes I got along well with the editors, sometimes. Scientists, usually, were very friendly. The reason was that I never went to any important scientist without having prepared myself ahead along his own field. This is very important: you don't go to a scientist and say to him, "What the hell do you know?" He can't think, he won't know what to talk with you.

#### Providing Newspapers with Science News

G.B. Lal: Nowadays they issue a handbill all the time; every mail it comes out, Stanford University, Berkeley, all of 'em. They didn't exist, they didn't have these intermediaries who sent out science stories. So nowadays, because they want money from the government, they continuously rain, now they're becoming a nuisance to me. So I usually pick up something that interests me; otherwise, to hell with it.

Riess: Maybe you don't even need the science writers now.

G.B. Lal: We don't need science writers, quite right. The fact of the matter, they inundate the city desk. All of these gadgets that come out, from any, Cal Tech and so forth, they send to every editor. City editors get it, everybody gets it.

Riess: And they are well written?



G.B. Lal: Well, they are taken interviews by the people who endorse them, the scientists endorse them. So they come to us. And sometimes, even despite the fact that they're handed down, I will pay attention to them, and develop [them] myself. Mostly if I'm concerned, I leave it to the others, routine work, I say eh, let them go on.

So the editors today try to localize and make stories pertaining to their own issues and so on. But that's good. I'm very glad; I like to see a flood of science interest.

Now, the Saturn story, or when you get cracked atoms, something happens, everybody gets that, everybody just gets in because the universities call them and give it. They don't explain. In matters of physics--now, for example, when they made a discovery of the new particle at Stanford University, oh, '76, I forgot the date, they found a new particle, very sensational--well, I went there, I talked to the Dr. Richter, the leader, had a long talk with him. And I wrote the article very carefully, I sent it back to him for correction, we corrected it, and what the hell, the paper, they didn't publish it. I was so frustrated.

However, another time, somebody got it in their head and said let's have a story on it, I went and wrote and they published it. But, this sort of thing we just have to put up with; you can't help it.

The idea of matter and anti-matter; up to this day, I have such difficulty in making anybody in the service understand what the scientists means by matter and anti-matter. And I don't blame the poor editors. What the hell can be anti-matter? I can't say to you, good Mr. Edward Teller, and anti-Edward Teller. But, the hell, we do what we can, we say it means it's positive and negative electricity; particles differing only in one thing, otherwise exactly alike.

Riess: When you were representing the International News Service, you were the science writer for the Hearst papers. How does the INS fit in?

G.B. Lal: INS was the distributing syndicate; but Hearst papers, there's no distinction. It was a Hearst paper syndicate. So it comes to the same thing. In other words, I would give one copy to the newspaper where I had my office, for example the New York American, and afterwards the New York Journal American, we call it. At one time, there were three Hearst newspapers in New York City alone; and the division of it would be morning service, or afternoon service. I was supposed to give to the morning service.

Then they would give automatically the copy to INS, and distribute it. Or, sometimes I'd work at the INS office, and the paper would get it; that's all. And in my case, now and then Mr.



G.B. Lal: Hearst, when he was in a good mood, old man, ordered that my article be published in a particular place especially in the paper, so people can spot it.

We all had to constantly play, with such a big organization, all kind of devices to get in, you know. Especially science, because people didn't understand it. Science was not popular.

William Randolph Hearst, and the American Weekly

Riess: When you went to New York, did you have a staff of other science writers, or were you it?

G.B. Lal: Well, when I was science editor of the American Weekly magazine, then I gave assignments sometimes to other people, and paid them. But usually I had to work too hard to make sense even to them. They helped me very seldom onto a damn thing. A couple of men I helped to develop, but not much. They were college professors, too. Teachers of science and so forth.

Riess: Not newspapermen?

G.B. Lal: No, they were mostly freelancers who taught science, and so forth. No newspapermen, I didn't need any. I had enough staff, a good library, and all kind of things; two secretaries, ordered all kinds of scientific magazines, and so on and so on.

Riess: And did the American Weekly carry a science article each week?

G.B. Lal: No-o-o, we decided in a news conference whether something should be written or not.

Riess: American Weekly is the Sunday insert, isn't it?

G.B. Lal: It was a Sunday magazine, but it was not confined to Hearst newspapers. It was in many other newspapers; it had a paid circulation of 9 million. And it was read by at least every two or three people, so it was one of the most influential magazines of its kind in the country.

Riess: When was this that it was nine million? In 1936, when you--

G.B. Lal: Oh, they closed the damn thing after I left there and came back here, must have been 60s or something, early.

Riess: I see.



G.B. Lal: But I disconnected myself with it in '54, and then I got retirement status, on the condition that I'll continue to write what I damn please whenever I please. It was just like Mr. Hearst: he thinks I write sometimes quality stuff. Whether they publish it or not, I send him copies. Even when I write this article, I send a copy to New York, the head office. Whether they use it to send to other papers or not—you see, the difficulty is of a legal nature. This is where the question of monopoly comes in.

The newspaper monopoly--the government fights trusts, they want the competition. So these people have to have a central organization as well as give local autonomy to newspapers; as you've seen, they're quite different. But something unified to keep--otherwise, leave them to do their own, so that everybody appoints his own writer, and all that, particularly to show that they're all individual papers. That's a very complicated affair. It was simpler in my time, in Mr. Hearst's time. He was the boss, he wrote the articles and published all over.

And, it's a complicated personal story, and none of my business. His life story is here [pointing to a book], tells all about it.

But that's not the point. I picked up a very tiny corner.

Riess: How much did you see of Mr. Hearst? Tell me about Mr. Hearst.

G.B. Lal: Very little; I didn't want to see him. He's a difficult man to see. He could get something in his head and tell me, but I used to get messages from him directly. Sometimes I'd get a little piece of paper, torn off from the edge of a newspaper, in which it says, "Lal to write--" and so on. And he'd send it to me, and I'd just write it.

On day I got an enquiry from Mr. Hearst. His secretary, Colonel Willicombe--

Riess: What's the name?

G.B. Lal: Willicombe, Colonel Willicombe.

He said, "Chief wants to know, what do you mean by such and such an article?" Mr. Hearst read, in the Los Angeles Examiner, some story which I sent from New York. But you see, I don't write the headline, the local people write the headline. It was completely different from what I'd written. Mr. Hearst, the headline got him upset or something.

I made an investigation, what the hell was the article. I immediately wired back, "Article so-and-so quite different, please see reference. Title, I don't know why they put it." Wired back, "Thank you. Explanation satisfactory."



G.B. Lal: He kind of kept an eye on everything, he was very vigilant. I knew that he was interested, not in science, but in science news, the way it was presented. He knew Milliken, he was a friend and when I introduced, as I told you, this big story of cosmic rays, and the universe, he liked it, and he ordered them all to publish it. Made me an offer.

Riess: What did you say?

G.B. Lal: I said, I don't want to leave here; to me, it's a nice pleasant little village, but comfortable. As far as I was concerned in those days, I didn't have much ambition.

But it's, [Hearst speaking] "I'm appointing you to a big job; do you want to go there or not?"

"Well, Sir, I will." So I went there. [laughter] That kind of thing, you know.

Riess: So when you got that transfer to New York, then, was that through a personal interview with him?

G.B. Lal: He appointed me science editor of the whole damn service, what else?

Riess: But I mean, did you actually come into his office and talk to him about it.

G.B. Lal: What? Personally? No, no, orders came to Mr. Coblenz. No, any managing editor at that time--they do things in a nice way, never break their own rules.

Riess: Well, I'm sorry that you can't tell us some great anecdotes about "The Chief."

G.B. Lal: No. I do know a few, but I won't tell you.

Riess: Nice ones?

G.B. Lal: Well--nothing about any member of the Hearst family. Not that I don't know a few things, but I won't.

Riess: How about Mr. Coblenz? He's part of the family, huh?

G.B. Lal: Mr. Coblenz became my life-long friend, and he's the one who put me to work, with the extension of Mr. Hearst. And he was dear to me up to the end of his life, and he was very helpful.

Another editor who stood by me as long as he could was Walter Howey. His name is the one was signed on that pamphlet that you read. (See pp. 110-112)



Riess: Oh yes, that's right, yes.

G.B. Lal: Walter Howey was a very remarkable man. He is the person about whom Ben Hecht wrote the "Front Page" play. Yes, he was the hero of "The Front Page." He had a remarkable talent for increasing circulation.

Fortunately for me, he had a liking for technology. He had some ideas of his own, and he made some little inventions. And he came to have such faith in me that he said I was the best science editor in the whole United States; not that I believed it. But that's what he told Mr. Hearst. He became a great friend of mine, up 'til the end. I remember that he said, "Laddie, I'm interested in this thing called a transistor. Do you think I could ever look at it, or something?"

Riess: He called you "Laddie?"

G.B. Lal: He used to call me "Laddie." So, I called up the Bell Telephone Laboratories in Murray Hill. They knew me, and they invited me, and invited Mr. Howey. He was probably one of the first newspaper people who saw the original transistor, a tiny little thing like a split pea, which transformed communications, became so important. And he was impressed by the fact that these people greeted me like an old friend, the scientists knew me. So, he was very much impressed by that.

Another thing, he liked medical articles. He said, "Keep in touch with all science yourself, but the for Weekly, only write on medicine."

Riess: Why?

G.B. Lal: Don't ask me. Editors have nuts in their heads. So--all right. I wrote only articles [on medicine]. But every article I wrote, I sent to the American Medical Association. "You check up by your best authorities, and write me." Then he published it, and that saved us a lot of trouble with any cases and so forth.

Riess: Was there a particular person at the AMA who would do this for you?

G.B. Lal: I dealt with the editor of the AMA journal. And they had their own committee, said they'll give it to the specialists.

Riess: And would they process it quickly, and efficiently?

G.B. Lal: Oh, regularly, yes.

Riess: I mean would it take weeks, or months?



G.B. Lal: No, no, as soon as the stuff goes it comes back. We never published anything without their okay. It saved us trouble, a couple of damage suits.

Anecdotes About Medical Science Writing and  
Other Science Writing

G.B. Lal: For example, one article I wrote was that the use of tannic acid on burns is not scientifically warranted. And some industrial corporation, who was making lots of money on that, they threatened with a suit. We just simply handed them the letter from the AMA, the endorsement, and they shut up; that was the end of it. Those things happen all the time. So I had to be very careful about them. It was a big business. Because there are thousands of people and these business people sell, and we wanted to get their ads. For each page, you get thousands of dollars of ads in it, so at the same time, we didn't want to offend them, and yet we wanted to tell the truth.

Riess: Didn't you often find yourself describing medicines or drugs that would eventually become commercial properties, and then there was some conflict of whether this was--

G.B. Lal: I'll give an example, sure. There is a drug called Benadryl, some antihistamine drug. Now, the Reader's Digest published an article, "Cure for Colds." A common cold cure. And this was written by no less a person than Paul deKruif, who was getting enormous money from Reader's Digest, writing once in a while, anything he damn pleased.

But I was asked to write about it--Benadryl, so I went to one of the companies, and I investigated, I managed to get the top authorities, and all I got out of it was, any of these antihistamine drugs have a tendency to dry up the nose. One of the symptoms of a common cold is, you know [sniffles], that's it. [With the drug] the secretions are dried, and to the extent of that, the symptoms are relieved, but the Benadryl has no specific effect upon the cause of common colds, which is supposed to be a virus, and it is not an anti-viral substance, it has nothing to do with the virus. So I made this clear, and wrote an article.

Well, this was not particularly liked by some companies who were making this kind of stuff. They must have complained to Mr. Hearst--not the big Hearst, but Mr. Bill Hearst [Jr.] was in charge--and I went there to the corporation and spent the whole day and looked into material, and I wrote as I pleased.



G.B. Lal: Bill Hearst [Jr.] wrote to me what I think of it. I wrote him a paper at least forty pages, fully describing the whole situation. Nothing happened, he just accepted it. That's all there is to it; he accepted what I said.

I'm going to tell you one story which you really ought to know. Where the hell, I put it somewhere, maybe some time I'll show it. This is really funny, got big play, all of a sudden. One day I was in New York in August or something, I don't know; nasty weather, getting very tired of the city. So I took up this scientific literature that had come to me, up-to-date, and I found a special treatment for a certain kind of meningitis, infection of the meninges of very small children, which is often fatal. Particularly bugs, bacteria, of what they call gram-negative type. These were very early days of, must be 1945, '47, I forget the date.

But a Chinese scientist in New York, at Mt. Sinai hospital I think it was, [on the] staff, had used one of these new antibiotics of that time. They call it bacitracin--

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G.B. Lal: Well, this article was read by some man near Albany, New York, up there. He had a baby six months old, who was dying of this very infection, pus and everything, and they had nothing, they gave all treatments, wouldn't do any good. The man read my article, and he asked the doctor, why don't they try this stuff? "Oh, we don't take our medical practice from newspapers," and so on.

Well, the kid was turning blue, nearly dying, when he insisted that this must be given a trial. Anyway, they telephoned to me, and I put them in touch with this doctor, and the kid was cured. The Albany newspaper came out with a big headline, "Science Writer Saves the Life of a Baby." I still have got a copy of that. Oh, Mr. Hearst was very pleased, and he published it in San Francisco.

Riess: Oh yes!

G.B. Lal: Bacitracin. It's the only thing I can think of to positively prove that I did some good. [laughs] There's the concrete proof.

Riess: As a sort of crude question, to follow up on this--

G.B. Lal: Please ask me anything you want.

Riess: Does that mean that you would get a raise?

G.B. Lal: Raise? [surprised] No.

Riess: Would you get a raise each time you did something like that?



G.B. Lal: No, no. No, I had a contract, it was part of my work.

Riess: Oh, I know, but I mean he might have said--

G.B. Lal: No, we don't do that here. I got my raise when I was--it was not like that.

Riess: So there wouldn't be real rewards for a thing like that.

G.B. Lal: Only time I got a reward was--I think I told you--when I broke that cancer story here. Then Mr. Hearst, the old man, sent me a check of \$500, and raised my salary. That's the only time a particular story brought me that kind of thing, but otherwise not.

But this drug has a very funny story. Tracy is the name of a girl. Baci means bacteria. They named the drug after this girl Tracy, who was a little kid who got into some kind of injury and accident, and a lot of mud got stuck to her wounds and strangely enough, the doctors--it was at Yale University or somewhere--they noticed that the germs had disappeared. There was something in that mud that cleared up the infection.

And they isolated the organism, and called them after this girl, bacitracin: "bacteria of Tracy."

Riess: That's really interesting.

G.B. Lal: I've put that in, of course, as a part of the story.

Riess: Well, you know, you do make science writing sound just plain exciting, among other things.

G.B. Lal: Oh, very exciting to me.

Riess: Yeah. It reminds me of the kind of science sleuthing stories of Berton Roueche, the New Yorker writer, who wrote a book called Five Blue Men.

G.B. Lal: You know something? I'll tell you my weakness: long ago I was interested in science fiction, many years ago, before I became a science writer. But I don't like science fiction, because science to me is so exciting, and--

Riess: This is not science fiction.

G.B. Lal: No, I'm just telling you. Many people ask me about science fiction. I don't like science fiction, because it sort of weakens my intense interest in the original, wonderful work. I make my own way of handling it, instead of being bothered by somebody else's long



G.B. Lal: harangue about it, of a layman--even of smart people. I very seldom read it, unless a specialist writes in their own field. Then I'll talk to them.

I got excited, and I got very wonderful stuff. What is second-hand from another guy like myself, I don't want to read it. [chortling]

And yet I think it's a very good thing, because--for young people especially--I'm for any kind of passing on genuinely scientific ideas among the people, any kind, particularly for children and women.

What I want to do now is, if I live long enough, to build up my own story, my own evolution, you know, changes in my own beliefs--one person of the twentieth century, nineteenth to twentieth century. (I've lived over two centuries.) By shedding my old beliefs, changing them, alteration of them, I am finally coming down to a viewpoint which is not only a kind of pallid intellectualism, but a real conviction that we have a key today we never had before, in the redemption of man, by throwing so many of the old superstitions which keep us fighting each other, and all that destruction. I don't think much of that. You know my views, I'm saying them all the time.

Riess: Right.

G.B. Lal: Aren't you thirsty or something? Let's have a little something.

Riess: One little question. Did you ever interview people like Arthur [C.] Clarke, or Isaac Asimov?

G.B. Lal: No, I don't have to, Asimov's a member of my organization. We're equals. I can hardly get anything new from him. I've got some of his books here. I buy books of some of my colleagues. And sometimes, I get something out of them. Now, of course, Gerhard Piel, who is a publisher and editor of the Scientific American, he's not only my personal friend, but I encourage him, he's a great guy.

Riess: Walter Alvarez?

G.B. Lal: Oh, he was a friend of mine. He was a physician, medicine is his own specialty, he had the original ideas. Walter and I became very friendly. I wrote articles about him, and I knew him up to the day he died. Oh yeah, commendable man.

Or Karl Menninger, or Paul deKruif, they are scientific people.

Riess: Tell me about Lewis Thomas.



G.B. Lal: I have never met him. I have great admiration for him. If I had time, I would have interviewed him in New York, but he was busy giving a lecture at Yale or something. He has a viewpoint that I agree with.

Riess: Succinctly, what is it?

G.B. Lal: Well, in his book The Lives of a Cell, and another book, I can't remember the title,\* he said that some day, possibly, an explanation of consciousness, and even of self-consciousness, might come out of research of biochemistry and physics. It may not, but that is his hope. And he's certainly opposed to any kind of destruction of human values. Wholly my own creed.

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\*The Medusa and the Snail.



## IX SOME BELIEFS

The New Renaissance

G.B. Lal: But I want to say, over and over again, that I am not a man who blindly opposes war or violence between human beings. My viewpoint is that unless and until there is a substitute for it, it is rather foolish to expect that there will be peace, and the substitute comes out of inventions which help human beings to reduce their hard labor, and get enough food and so forth. Well, the scientists are the people who if they ever get their own--as I say, it's not the age of science--if ever such a thing does come, they are the only ones who can solve these problems. How the hell can a fiction writer solve it? They don't know nothing about it, all the old stories, from the days of Homer, Mahabharata, and all those nice, wonderful, blah, blah...

A substitute for force of arms, militarism of some kind, can come only through the invention of methods of using impersonal energy to do the work which the poor hired or slave people had to do, whether in Ireland or anywhere else. Our prosperity of the elite depends upon the work of people who have to work hard with their muscles. Now, what scientific people are unable to do is to substitute the work of atoms and electrons for the energy of the human body. Human values will increase if you liberate this kind of servitude labor.

But therefore, indeed, dear, anybody who goes back to the glorification of war, is going backwards to pre-inventive times. I call that fundamental reactionism.

Riess: That's interesting. Now, I'll let you have a drink. [interruption in tape]

G.B. Lal: It seems to me that perhaps the most important development in history was what we call the Renaissance in Europe, fifteenth century, for some reason not fully understood, only partly.



G.B. Lal: The old medieval system of faith and beliefs, and acceptance of power, began to give way to curiosity, questioning. Science was a new way to question and find out what the facts really are like, rather than accepting them as coming down traditionally.

With the science movement, about the fifteenth century, started with the Renaissance, came also the art movement. The Renaissance mustn't be understood merely to going back to the Greeks; that isn't what it was, it was creativity, new. It must have been spurred by the ancient, pre-Christian knowledge. The same thing happened in Japan. Essentially, the questioning, whys and wherefores. Not just authority say-so.

What I'm saying is that we now today need a world-wide renaissance, not merely country-to-country renaissance. Today is the time for a whole world renaissance, for which we need large visions, both of freedom and of science, two aspects of the same thrust forward.

Riess: And do you expect these things to arrive simultaneously and independently?

G.B. Lal: Up to this time they have been going more or less--particularly the last hundred, two hundred years--parallel. They intersect once in a while, but there's no particular cohesion of feeling behind it.

Now, that is largely because the science hasn't developed in a big way enough yet to be able to create a new historical power, to substitute all matters of command, and obedience, and to put them more on a reasoning basis.

Riess: There's a "natural" instinct to fear science, I think, because of some of the dreadful developments.

G.B. Lal: That's very true, my dear, but you see, all these so-called applications, mis-applications, anything you want to call them: poison gases--

Riess: Germ warfare--

G.B. Lal: --nuclear war, all that kind. All of that comes from non-scientists. The people who command these things are not scientists; the scientists are merely hired people. So it's not the age of science. It is the age of nationalism, which itself is a very important development, because the combination of authoritarianism and participation by everybody and anybody--in other words, what we call democratic process, the sharing of power by all people, no matter how small--is both a very important step in progress, and carries with it the danger of misunderstanding the very nature of authority that you're dealing with.



G.B. Lal: Like a frightened child, it tries to cling back to the old authority. And those who innovate also go to extreme levels of irrational kind, like the ideologists of Russia, probably. For them, Karl Marx has become some kind of prophet.

But then, these are inevitable, they always happen.

Riess: Do you think that the think-tanks are effective?

G.B. Lal: I think there are no think-tanks that I ever heard of which are not a part of the governing system; they're not independent. They are probably correct in finding out limited issues, the issues set for them by outsiders. They are not philosophers by themselves. They are not [autonomous] like Plato, or somebody who comes out and starts an innovation. There are very few like that. There have been a great many in our time, but not in the think-tanks that you think about. All these people who've changed the history of China, or of Japan, or of India, or of Israel, or Russia, they were not small people, they were great people. They were remarkable people. But the think-tanks attached to each of the systems are very limited. [chuckles] They get theories and they work with computers, whatever they do.

### Science for the People

Riess: In your talk at the press club, you talked about science of the people, by the people, for the people.

G.B. Lal: Yes, I didn't have time to develop that. I was giving an instance. For example, I was going to say, a city like San Francisco, or New York, or Chicago, should have a number of simple science institutes, like the public libraries. You go to a public library, you are supposed to be able to get some book there.

The public library tradition originated in Alexandria, before they became Moslems, in the days of Hypatia. But the Greeks and the Romans were ruling there. The beginning of this library was fifth century, up to fifth century or so, in Alexandria.

Now, it was a nice thing to have printing. When the printing press came, originally the idea started with Germans--Gutenberg Bible was to disseminate the biblical knowledge for Tom, Dick and Harry; this was the Reformation idea. The Catholics didn't believe in that; they had the Vulgate in Latin. They didn't talk in ordinary vernacular.



- Riess: I can't let you give me the whole history, because we'll never get through here! You must tell me what you think we should do now.
- G.B. Lal: Well, I think we should have institutes here like the public library branches, where they should have microscopes; they should have, possibly some kind of telescope. Certainly have simple instruments of measurement, meter measurements, grams, so forth. Make them make small experiments like finding out is something acid or alkali. Maybe to make a little litmus paper test. Certainly microscopes to look at the cells. These fundamental things should be available for very little, two bits or one dollar fee, something like that. And they should be public supported, city-wide institutions. Also, basic literature should be there; even a poor science writer doesn't know where the hell to go in order to look up the reference of some important matter.
- Riess: So this will close the gap between "them" and "us"?
- G.B. Lal: It will help to close it, just as any library does. That's what a circulation library does. I think there's a very great need of that. The Planetarium's a good thing.
- Riess: How about the Exploratorium?
- G.B. Lal: Well, I was there long ago, once or twice, when Philip Oppenheimer was working there. Something is better than nothing, but it just didn't mean much to me. There's hardly no place to sit there, nothing, it's just nothing at all. I don't think much of it, and it certainly just became a little commercial gadget of some kind. It's just a little thrust in the right direction, but nobody goes there, no transportation there. Hardly anything worth mentioning. You go to a public library, any time you can go there. Who can go there and make an experiment there? There's nothing to make experiments.
- Riess: It [Exploratorium] makes an effort to make science amusing and popular and accessible.
- G.B. Lal: Not only that, but to participate in it. The important thing is to get the hang of the thing, which you don't unless you do something with your own hands, and some personal effort.

If you've never looked at a virus through a microscope, how are you going to get an idea of it? It's just a word. Even the bacterium. I went to the University of California to take a look at a supposed virus causing cancer or something. They were kind, they showed it to me, and I got the first idea what the darn little particle is like; and it's inside of a cell. I think Dr. Rubin did it. I never forgot that.



G.B. Lal: I never forgot, once I took a look at the "horse's head" in the Nebula of Orion, one of the most spectacular things. A moderate-power telescope showed me. It was simply thrilling.

### The Instincts

Riess: Do you think that it is just as important for people--who will then know about science--to know an equal amount about poetry, and painting, and music?

G.B. Lal: Oh, it goes without saying, yes, certainly. But why? Because the instinctive part--certainly, there's two kinds of instincts, broadly. There are the high-drive instincts, like hunger, related to sex, and defense, aggression, so forth. And then there are the gentler, flexible instincts, curiosity, aesthetic pleasure; the ones who help to humanize our tougher emotions. In order to find something, to sublimate our willingness to fight for everything, you need something else. And socializing, these are what we call the "finer things," in the sense that they're not so imperative. You don't have to go to bed for six months, still won't die for lack of sexual intercourse. But if you get access to it, especially to make love, I don't mean choke a poor woman, look at the amount of stimulation, and satisfaction and creativity you get out of it.

I'm going to show you a book just now that will illustrate my viewpoint. Will you get that little red book on the shelf, called Opera Psychotherapy? Right here, on the top, yes. Right underneath.

Riess: This is Galbraith.

G.B. Lal: No, no, now where did I put it? Yeah, that's it; now look at that. Here is one of my old Bohemian friends, Bartalini. What a wonderful, witty book he wrote; I give him a big boost on that. This is a wonderful thing to play with, these kinds of things.

Riess: Opera Psychotherapy, by Gualtiero Bartalini.

G.B. Lal: Let me show you how marvelous this is. Look at the very first line. You can't help bursting into laughter. And then, absolutely scholarly. Read the first stanza.

Riess: [reads] "Prelude: if you've read Havelock Ellis, Adler and Freud, Jung, Watson and Pavlov and head-shrinking boys,/ You'll begin feeling guilty, sinful and lewd,/ Culpable, criminal, steeped in foul terpidude. In Flagrante delicto, an old Latin phrase,/"



- Riess: Means caught with your pants down, a mere paraphrase./ We all have committed a crime of some kind,/ if not in reality, at least in our mind."
- G.B. Lal: Then he takes all the famous operas and gives hell to them. [interviewer laughs] I want you particularly to look at "The Girl of the Golden West." I mean, this is, you see, creativity, turning your aggressions, or whatever you call that, into something and humorous. It expands and humanizes people.
- Riess: Sublimation, isn't it?
- G.B. Lal: Sublimation in a way, pleasant. Not ascetic, not chastity.
- Riess: You say he's an old Bohemian friend, what do you mean?
- G.B. Lal: He's one of the leaders of old Bohemia of San Francisco.
- Riess: The true Bohemia, or the Bohemian Club?
- G.B. Lal: Oh, I didn't mean that technical term, a member of the Bohemian Club. Look, this painting, he made all the pictures himself.
- Riess: Lovely, yes.
- G.B. Lal: And he can do anything, make dresses, sings every song.
- Riess: Is he still living?
- G.B. Lal: Oh, I should say so, very much so. This book is just out. "Madame Butterfly," you see, he gets into everything.
- Riess: "The Girl of the Golden West?" What are you looking for?
- G.B. Lal: Now, "Girl of the Golden West" is so amusing. A very skillful fellow. [interruption in tape]
- Riess: This is the last lines of the spoof of the "Girl of the Golden West." "Thus ends the opus of the West,/ Of hard-boiled thugs and mining meanies./ It also ends the wear and tear/ of Dave Belasco and Puccini." [chuckling and laughter]

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## X MORE ON SAN FRANCISCO'S BOHEMIANS

Raine Bennett and Company

G.B. Lal: [speaking of Raine Bennett and the Western Arts Club] I wrote about that in the Examiner a little bit.

Riess: Yes, I have that article.

G.B. Lal: So he was the founder of that, but I'll tell you something--I don't want to go into that, but it will amuse you.

Riess: What?

G.B. Lal: All right, let's go into that now. [interviewer laughs]

Raine Bennett had imagination, so he got hold of Paul Verdier's house, 1001 Vallejo St., up on Taylor. (That's where Sally Stanford held court afterwards. She had it for a bordello.) These were the more innocent days, when we were trying to be artists.

So he had no money, and the house belonged to Paul Verdier, of the City of Paris. And he had imagination; he wrote to Paul Verdier, and he said, "Look, I have started a Western Arts Club, and I can easily have one thousand members. So we would be able to pay you rent and eventually buy the house"--charging members five dollars a month or whatever it was, no easy matter--"instead of your house lying vacant." And by golly, he made some kind of a deal with him, paid him a few hundred dollars, borrowed it from somebody here, I don't know how he started that. I left it to him.

Well, he had two men whom he could trust: me and Fred Bullock, who was an Englishman; he dealt with plants, his specialty was outdoor decorations of plants, whatever you call them. He would go and put plants in peoples' houses.

Riess: Do you mean landscape architecture?



G.B. Lal: Outdoor [indoor?] decoration, especially plants. Anyway, he loved plants. He supplied some plants to San Simeon too.

We three said we'd live together--we lived in different places anyhow, so why don't we live together. Fine. The first night, we need some food, so we went down to a Mexican restaurant on Powell Street, near Broadway, and we got ourselves nicknames: "father," "son" and "the holy ghost," [laughs] which came out of this story. (I don't know which one of us told the story.)

Down south there was a Negro preacher, and he was not getting enough of these Negroes to attend his church. So he sent his boy Jimmy, he said, "Jim, you go and get a white pigeon. And go to the church and get in the loft, and when I say 'Father in heaven, let us have peace,'" or some damn thing, "you let the pigeon down in the congregation."

Well, first he would go to scold the Negroes, why they don't go to church, said they'd go to sin and all that sort of thing. Then the dramatic moment came, and he said, "Father in heaven, let out the holy ghost." The pigeon was representing the holy ghost, you understand? "Let's have come down the holy ghost." Nothing happened, the pigeon didn't come down. So he got angry, and he shouted to God, "Father! Father! Send down the holy ghost!" So Jim said, "Pastor, the cat has eaten up the holy ghost, shall I throw down the cat?" [laughter]

So we got our name. Bennett was the son and Bullock was the father, and I was the holy ghost. [more laughter]

#### George Sterling and H.L. Mencken

Riess: That's good.

George Sterling figures in your stores. He committed suicide in 1926.

G.B. Lal: I met him in 1919, or something like that. He was a wonderful friend of mine. I just loved him. I became sick once, and every morning he would come to see me before he did anything else, and bring me some book to read, and so on. He introduced me to all the literary people; Robinson Jeffers, Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, I met these people through him. Edgar Lee Masters, any literary person who would come here. H.L. Mencken, he introduced me to Mencken.



Riess: So when these literary nobility came to town, Sterling would make the introductions for you?

G.B. Lal: They all contacted him, and he would take me down and introduce me to them, and I'd write articles, and so on. Edna Millay came, for example. She came, I think, just after George was dead. I took her to see Robinson Jeffers.

Riess: Was his suicide a shock to people, or not?

G.B. Lal: Shock to me; I was terribly unhappy. I saw him when he was lying dead and I didn't know he was dead. What happened was that Mencken came here, and Mencken was supposed to come a little earlier, from Los Angeles, and he was detained, and George had collected a lot of wine for Mencken, to have a party.

So when he came, George had already started drinking because we were late, something—I don't know what the details were--and George didn't go down to receive him at the S.P. Station—he came from Los Angeles. And I went there, and Idwal Jones, a writer for the Examiner, a very well-known man, we two went there.

I had already met Mencken through George, in 1920. So we were always in touch with him. We both [Jones and Lal] went there. Well, he was very much upset. And, he was in the St. Francis Hotel.

Now, George Sterling had arranged to have a dinner for Mencken at the house of a friend of ours, whose name was Mrs. Drew Chidester, wife of a big shipping man here.\* Chidester was a collaborator with the Robert Dollar Company, and so forth. And she had a very nice house, and she said she would have the dinner, and so on.

But now that George Sterling was lying sick, the plan was changed, and Idwal Jones said that he would like to have us for dinner in his studio. He lived up near Chestnut St., or somewhere up there, And this was the second day after Mencken came, or maybe in the evening of the same day, I don't remember.

But in the evening, I picked up Mencken at the St. Francis, got a taxi, and we were going to Idwal Jones', for dinner. And Idwal had, besides us, one of the editors of the Examiner, a close

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\*Nell Chidester was a longtime friend of Lal's from early Bohemian days. Drew died and left quite a fortune to Nell, who later married a very young man--thus carrying forward the Bohemian tradition of nonconformity...Lal was amused by it. [Phyllis N. Herron.]



G.B. Lal: friend of his, city editor, Bill Wren, William Wren. (Idwal had a very pretty daughter, I remember, children and wife.)

It was my business to pick up Mencken from the St. Francis. He said, "Let's try to get hold of George, let's take him out to dinner." I said, "Surely." So we went up to the Bohemian Club, and tried to ring him, no answer, so we went upstairs to the room. And there I saw a light through the transom, and we knocked and knocked, no answer. Well, I didn't know what to make of it; I thought he was asleep or something. But as we were coming down in the taxi, passing through Union Square, Mencken said to me, "Lal, we are not going to see our George again." I said, "What do you mean?" That's all he said.

I felt very sad about it, because I didn't know what to make of it, though I understood what he meant. Well, we went up there. All evening, all we could talk was how disappointed we were that Sterling wasn't there.

After dinner was over, we went home. About four or five o'clock in the morning, Idwal Jones telephoned me, woke me up.

I said, "What happened?"

He said, "The report has come that Sterling was dead." So, we must have seen him when he was dead already, both Mencken and I. And Mencken said he would never see him again.

That story had been published in all kinds of twisted ways, and all of the books, several books, Mencken letters and so on, but this is exactly what happened; I was the only man who knew what happened.

Riess: You pounded on the door, and so you didn't see him.

G.B. Lal: No answer. And I didn't think--I thought he was asleep, or God knows what it was. He [Mencken] immediately said, "We are not going to see him again." And that naturally saddened all of us. And the next morning, we got the news that he'd died. So sad.

But you know something else that goes with it, since you're interested. He used to carry prussic acid, cyanide, with him, he told me, "Lal, you should do the same thing, because when you don't want to live you can terminate your life as you wish." On one occasion we were out for dinner at a French [restaurant], very lovely--he was kind of in an unhappy mood.

So I said to the hostess, "He's in a bad mood, he's talking of suicide." So we got him out, and we said, "Now, you are a great poet so what are you talking about?" He was sore with a girl,



G.B. Lal: that's what the whole thing was. He had brought a poem he'd written to Shelley. Afterwards it was published, a beautiful poem. We all listened to that, and applauded him and so on. I forgot about that, but when he died, then I realized that he actually had kept his word. He believed that when life seems stale, then why go on living it? So it was a very complex situation.

Riess: But he was not a balanced man.

G.B. Lal: What is a balanced man, if you'll kindly tell me? Agree with you or not, I don't know. What is a balanced man? He was a wonderfully kind man, a generous man.

Riess: Of course I don't know what a balanced man is, but how do you think he would be diagnosed now?

G.B. Lal: That would depend on the person who makes the comment. To me, he was one kind of rational man. [emphatically] To most people he was crazy, a poet, or something, because these categories are not known to them; they can't understand this kind of individuality.

For example, one thing about him; he was a man who could swim, and his famous abalone song became well-known. But, he'd go and fish and take out, and so on, and at the same time, he wrote an article which I lent to Jim Tully, who never gave it back to me-- I wish to God I had not been so generous--on cruelty to animals. He had a very severe aversion to that, any kind of cruelty.

As a matter of fact, his argument--I never forgot--he said, we sentient creatures can talk, but they're dumb, they're helpless. And what a cowardly thing it is to inflict unkindness to somebody who can't defend himself. What a beautiful article, dear, I can't tell you.

He was so generous: I used to write poetry in those days; I was a member of the local poetry club. I had me a girlfriend whom I thought a hell of a lot of. She was a friend of George's too. One day, I wrote a couple of lines, and she showed it to George.

He said, "I wish I'd written this," and he took it from her, published it in the Atlantic Monthly magazine. And then he said to me, "Why don't you let me have your poems?"

I said, "George, you are the poet, what on earth?"

But that was his generosity, that's the kind of thing he was.



The Gathering Places

Riess: Were you a part of this gang who went to the Poppa Coppa's Montgomery Block Cafe?

G.B. Lal: Sometimes, yeah, no particular gang about it, but George introduced me to some of these places. Coppa's--I don't know with whom I went. Afterwards, when I began to earn some money, I myself made some choices of restaurants which I thought had wonderful food, two or three of them, very particularly. One of them is Camille's, up on Pine St., between Montgomery and Kearny; and side by side was [pauses]--I'll come back to it.

But these people were artists. Once, I took a group of science writers from New York to Camille's, Howard Blakesle, David Dietz, and Laurence. They said, "What do we order?" I said, "Ask them to start with Clams Camille's. Then you get a steak and anything." It's beautiful food.

Howard Blakesle ordered eight times Clams Camille's. They were artists, and I think the Spreckels people supported them.

Riess: Oh, that's interesting.

G.B. Lal: These other Bohemian places, like Bigin's, that was on Broadway and Columbus somewhere there. That was where I met Mencken, through my friend George, for the first time. The painters would paint the walls for nothing, and get free meals. We had wonderful food, and Julius, who afterwards established Julius' Castle, was one of the waiters in Bigin's.

In those days we had, you see, a Prohibition. If you could [be found with] wine or something, of course the feds would descend on you. But, however long it lasted, it lasted. What unified many of the so-called Bohemians at that particular time, strangely enough, was two things: one, of course, was liquor, because they were in revolt against Prohibition. And second thing, of course, was this liberation of the women at that time. The "flapper age," whatever you call it, was just coming out. They just got the votes in 1920; wasn't it September, 1920, this very month?

So these two things gave a new life to social life here. That was very interesting. But they were different from the later-day "hippies," so-called--of course, they didn't have drugs. Some must have taken [drugs], but usually there was no drugs there, just drink.

Riess: When we hear about those groups of people, it's more often men, though; you seldom hear women mentioned as part of the social scene.



G.B. Lal: Women were very good, and wonderful. I remember so many of them. Some of them were very skillful. One example--Ethel Turner, a novelist, a poet, and published a magazine called The Wanderer, in which she published my pieces a lot. There was Gladys Graham. There was [pauses] a very smart girl, Martha Cleo. They wrote some very good poetry.

Riess: Was it too early for the photographers?

G.B. Lal: There was one photographer, very famous. That was a German--what was the name? Arnold Genthe. And then there was a man by the name of Weston. They were just coming in. But essentially it was the age of painters: Maynard Dixon, Stackpole, Otis Oldfield, Charlie Grant, Xavier Martinez, members of the Bohemian Club.

Riess: The Montgomery Block area was where they hung out?

G.B. Lal: Some of them had their studios there, yes, mm-hmm. I just visited there once or twice. I was not interested in it.

Riess: How did you keep up your relationship with Mencken? Did you really see him a lot?

G.B. Lal: Mencken and I, for some reason, remained life-long friends. I think Mencken mentions me in his letters. Mencken was interested in science. He was a great writer, undoubtedly, but he was wholly for science. He was--he attacked religion, and said this is all wrong. And his learning was so massive; his arguments were massive, his studying.

He and I thought alike, in regard to everything, and so was born, much through letters, a personal friendship. Yes, through Sterling, but this was not enough. It was my interest in rationalism, and his, that we really became friends on. You see, I didn't have to shake off the traditional burden of Christianity. Like Jewish rationalists, I was a different culture, and his knowledge was very extensive, he knew all kinds of cultures.

#### Rationalists, and Believers

Riess: Are you saying that "the burden of Christianity" hampers intellectual development?

G.B. Lal: I think so, there's no doubt about it. The fact that the British were damn poor Christians made them go ahead. That is, they were not Christians, they were politicians, and businessmen, and they used Christianity just to spread their propaganda among the natives



G.B. Lal: whom they conquered. They were very damn poor Protestants themselves. They'd take their religion to Ireland to keep the Irish down, or to Africa, or to India. Everywhere they'd send their missionaries. Gunboat and the Bible, that was the formula. But they were not religious; they never took Christianity too seriously. My authority for that statement is nothing less than William MacDougal, the social psychologist. You read that in the book, he says so.

Riess: You were interested in the idea that scientists do have religious beliefs.

G.B. Lal: No, I was not interested in their religious beliefs at all. I had no interest in their religious beliefs.

Riess: They had a belief in a "higher being."

G.B. Lal: No, they hadn't. Quite wrong. My interest was strictly in ethics. What was the ethical aspect of a scientist? But Walter Howey insisted, "Don't for heaven's sake put an out-and-out atheist in my paper. At least give a lip-service to some kind of God, somewhere, liquid, solid, or gaseous." [interviewer laughs]

I said, "That's okay with me, I'll do the best I can."

So I had to pick up some of those who were slightly churchy or something like that. Now, you take a man like Dr. Alfred Kroeber, he was no Christian. But he was interested in the fact that civilization is universal, that's what he wrote about, and that's what I wanted them to write about.

Riess: Robert Gordon Sproul was a Protestant.

G.B. Lal: Well, he was no scientist. I put him in because I liked the University of California. Many of them were--they took out some of the best I had brought in, they didn't put it in their pamphlets; some very great people like Max Planck, his name doesn't appear, although I interviewed him. Or C.V. Raman, whatever, they just took out. But what the hell, I'm not for promotion. They had to do that--the paper did that for promotion, for the magazine.

Anyway, I'm glad that something stuck. The idea that scientists are not beasts, that some at least have a social conscience, that was my interest; and I think I was ahead of anybody else in doing that. That has remained a certain testimony to my own interest in ethics, not in creeds. That was just a little mark to get it through into the paper. But the rest is about humanity.



# The Faith of Great Scientists

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## Introduction

When I was about ten years old back home in Fort Dodge, Iowa, my dad said, "You've been going to Sunday School. You've heard one side of a subject. Tonight I'm taking you to hear Bob Ingersoll at the Fessler Opera House to learn the other side."

Robert Ingersoll was the great and scandalous agnostic of his day. What stuck in my mind was his statement: "Science proves there can be no God and no heaven after death. Life ends in the cemetery."

When we left, my father said, "Now you have two sides, which side do you believe?"

I said, "I believe the side my mother believes."

Ever since then, which was a half century ago, I have been impressed by the fact that the great groping men of all science have brought forth never-ending proof that the universe is governed by laws and Someone made those laws. That is why *The American Weekly*, which is a purely secular magazine, has dared to print these assertions of faith from the world's greatest scientists.

The early popular belief that scientists were atheists appears still to cling to many people, both learned and ignorant.

Out of the mouths of the scientists, including great Nobel prize winners, come the statements of faith which appear in the following pages.

Walter Howey  
*Editor*

THE AMERICAN WEEKLY

THE FAITH OF GREAT SCIENTISTS, a Collection of "My Faith" articles from The American Weekly.



G.B. Lal: If Arthur Compton said to me, after all, we believe the same father is all over--what I was interested was, he said that all of us are his children, that part interested me. I'm not interested in whether I'm biologically related with God, that's silly. To me, it doesn't matter. That's not the point.

When they asked Dr. Ernest Lawrence [to contribute], he said, "I don't want any part of it." Because he was a more honest scientist, he had no "belief."

Riess: He was a more honest scientist?

G.B. Lal: He was more honest of a scientist; he wouldn't give God any kind of bribe. That's all right, just a sheer scientist, and I respected him for that.

I wrote a very nice piece about the University of California in the American Weekly, a whole page of it because I loved it. It was my university. But that was the old university I have nostalgia for. Now it's gigantic, fragile business. And I'm glad it is, because if it meant even ten percent of these scientists will stand up for something else than the traditional values then we have got a powerful group.

The only thing I hope doesn't happen is a war. That ruins all values. I think so. It's not simply a case of murder, because shattering down culture after culture, all you get left is power, blindly. If there were no other alternative to it, I would say go ahead. But I think there is an alternative in technology; I think there's an alternative in practical applications of science, to satisfy human needs.

Riess: Whoa, whoa! [fearing the beginning of an extended lecture]

G.B. Lal: That's all I think.

Riess: Let me pick up a little thread from history.

G.B. Lal: Yes, dear.

Riess: What was this series that you wrote, called Flowers for the Living?

G.B. Lal: Oh, that was for the Daily News. Before I got on the Examiner, I was a staff of the San Francisco Daily News--in fact, two papers: first the Daily News, and then there was a paper called the Morning Herald, that collapsed, anyhow.

But for the Daily News, they wanted me to get to meet businessmen and others, and some distinguished people. So, it gave me an access to these business people, opened my eyes. I wrote about



G.B. Lal: Robert Dollar, I wrote about the man who started the Bank of America, Giannini. I remember that real estate man, Louis Lurie; he knew me up to the end of his days. [I wrote about] so many of these people, and some of them were really worthwhile, important people.

[Talking about a jeweler, Samuel Hegella [?]] He had a place near the Emporium and he had a motto for his store, "House of Lucky Wedding Rings"--"if you wear my ring the marriage won't break." I had a friend named Minor Chipman, University of Michigan, who worked there and made graphs, etc. I asked Samuel why he had Minor doing that and he said, "In my whole outfit, he's the only one who talks English correctly." [laughter]

##



## XI UNDERSTANDING INDIA

[Interview 4: December 3, 1981]

Rudyard Kipling

Riess: When did you first encounter the writings of Rudyard Kipling, and what do they mean to you, as an Indian?

G.B. Lal: Oh, well, I knew Kipling's books in India, and one or two of them appealed to me very much as an artist's work. One of them was a book about a blind man, "The Man Who Had Light," or something. It was about a blind man in India and I thought it was wonderful. Then I read his great book, so-called Kim, you know, and I began to understand his propaganda. He was a great imperialist propagandist--"the white man's burden" and all that stuff--and so I realized him as philosophically my antagonist, no compromise.

When I was in Berkeley, in one of the classes, or seminars, of literature--I think it was under Dr. Sanford--Aurelia Reinhardt was one of my classmates--this was of course long before she became president of Mills College. We all had some kind of thesis to write, an original theory relating to the romantic movement in English literature. I picked up a study comparing Edmund Spenser of the time of Queen Elizabeth and Rudyard Kipling of the days of Victoria. I showed that they were both very ardent, emotional patriots: Spenser deifies the "faerie queen" a little bit, and of course Kipling becomes the bard [of Victoria]. Well, the comparison I worked out and showed and all that--and I haven't a single copy or anything left of that, but it was at that time considered very original and so of course I got "A" and all that stuff.

I would have published it, but circumstances happened--doesn't matter. That was Kipling.

Riess: I was interested in your thoughts on some of the people who are supposed to have "understood" India, and interpreted India. What Western writers do you think of who have dealt well with India?

---

\*Probably The Light That Failed.



G.B. Lal: It is inevitable that the people of England and America, for example--I don't know anything about the views of the French or of the Germans, just stick to America and England--that they would take very different views about some of the extremely different artists, like the novelists and essayists, in regard to the institution of the British Empire. And this is where you can expect me to take quite a different view [laughing] from let us say an Englishman, cultured, or even the American imitators--though I don't think much of the American imitators of England anyhow, that's the truth.

But there, at that time, England was the greatest empire in the world. I do believe that it was far greater than the Roman Empire ever had been, ancient Roman. And I studied and compared them, not that I was a profound scholar of history, but I read the books. So, I thought it was very important for me to minimize as much as possible, or at least reduce to some extent, a cloud of prejudice that's created by the artists, more even than by the professors and the writers whom nobody reads anyhow. The work of such artists, if successful, was very important.

The second thing--now an interesting thing happened, that Kipling was the first man to get the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1907, I think. And he was born in Lahore, in India. To me, he was an Indian bastard. You understand me? A genius, but not liking the rest of us. And even not very fond of the British either, who looked down upon him a little bit as a foreigner from India. The British are very snobby people, snobbish people. So he's very interesting to study.

Riess: A man without a country?

G.B. Lal: I would not say that. I would simply say the attitudes of a people towards an artist--that's what we're talking about. He was not a man without a country, he was England's great star.

The next man to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in the whole British Empire, who do you think was he? An Indian, Tagore, who got it in 1913. And he was quite the opposite to Kipling in every sense of the word. So my loyalty, emotional, went to Tagore, and not to Kipling, but I was very fair to Kipling as an artist.

Riess: Were these prizes awarded because of the subject, or because of the writing?

G.B. Lal: Honey, if you can find out [how] the Nobel Committee [thinks], let me know, I'll write an article. I have no idea. This is what happened.



Riess: Was it propaganda?

G.B. Lal: They were great artists, both of them. You read their works, there's a lot of stuff in there, quite different kinds. But that's not the point. I'm just now putting an historic touch to well-known events in the development of literature.

John Kenneth Galbraith

Riess: You have read all of Galbraith. What do you feel his understanding was of India?

G.B. Lal: I think he was one of the greatest Americans who ever went out to India. And it isn't what his understanding of India was, which was plenty, but his own attitude toward life and politics. I like Galbraith very much. He is not liked in the Examiner office; he's not popular there; Mr. Hearst doesn't like him. But I think he is a remarkable teacher of economics and a great writer and I have all his books right here. I have corresponded with him. I interviewed him in Berkeley and he was very pleased with it. He is Canadian; he is an American but he is also Canadian, and so he can take a little detached viewpoint of certain things. As far as economic arguments and so forth, I am not competent to say anything. I just assimilate what he says and his competency.

Riess: Canada is another part of the Empire.

G.B. Lal: Yes. What I want to make clear is that in controversies such as economics of industrial society, American included, I take no sides; I am strictly an absorber of knowledge from competent authorities who come my way or I go after them. But I don't take sides at all. I am neither Socialist nor a Republican nor a Democrat--though if people ask me for money I sometimes give it to them. I want to keep a detached view and pick up the best from everything that I see reasonable. I am not committed emotionally to any of the "isms" except that I say, "Well, this may help in the general development of the human progress." That is the only criteria I use.

Riess: And Galbraith fits into this, this viewpoint.

G.B. Lal: Oh yes, to me he does. I dabble with the classical economists too.

The very question, the basic question, is what attitude to take towards the so-called institution of private property. This is the argument with which I had to deal in my university studies





*upper left:*  
G.B. Lal, in the  
Examiner offices,  
1978.

*upper right:*  
Lal, interviewing  
John Kenneth  
Galbraith, April  
1980.

*lower left:*  
Lal, on his 90th  
birthday.  
Portrait by Bill  
Flynn.

Examiner photos.







G.B. Lal: too. But all I did was to listen to the various teachers. I didn't want to become a practical economist, in other words a money-making economist. I had not the slightest interest in making money. Never. I didn't bother with it. My personal economic motive is extremely limited; so that I had sufficient to eat and be comfortable, that's all I cared about.

But the ideas [economic] in themselves intrigued me immensely. So I would go and I would read what Marx says and what his very opposite, Max Weber, says. And I had some very interesting experiences in a seminar in economics in Berkeley that I had at the time that Carleton Parker was here. He had gone to Germany, I think chiefly to get acquainted with the economics of Max Weber. Max Weber I assume wanted to demolish Marx as much as he could—to show that Marx was a jackass [laughs] and he probably was, I don't know, but he changed society.

This is the way I look at it. I am not a Marxist, but I'll be damned if I don't study the man's books and discuss it and talk to people. I'm open minded in these things.

Riess: Galbraith became your friend, didn't he?

G.B. Lal: Yes, these people became my friend because they somehow recognized that I may not be brilliant in my college theses, but that I was interested in the cause, the purpose, of these studies. My friendship was based upon sharing the passion of truth as any of them was propounding it. [telephone interruption]

Riess: Were there other ambassadors to India from America that you were acquainted with?

G.B. Lal: Well, the first ambassador from the United States to India was a classmate of mine, a very dear friend, Henry Grady. Grady and I were in the same seminar in Berkeley, and I was of course very happy.

Riess: Was he an enlightened representative?

G.B. Lal: I liked it, but it's probably emotional. I was very happy that he went there. He was a very fine man. His wife also I liked very much. She was always a lovely woman. Henry Grady was a great liberal, I think, or whatever you call them. But in any case—you see, these categories of American liberal and all don't apply to me at all.

And another man, he was the most important ambassador that ever went out there. Now who was that? World famous. A New England man, Chester Bowles. I liked him immensely. He and his wife were great people. They almost made India their own. They were lovely. People called them Indians.



Riess: Whatever little thesis I am trying to develop--

G.B. Lal: You develop anything you like, dear.

Riess: Let's say that it is impossible for Westerners to understand India.

G.B. Lal: No.

Riess: You say no.

G.B. Lal: No, it all depends who the Westerners are, and what Indians they want to see and try to understand. If you are talking about all Westerners--my God, there are so many of them. If you are talking about all Americans, there are so many of them. If you stick to diplomats, or some political leaders, then I may make or offer a few observations.

#### Eleanor Roosevelt

G.B. Lal: For example, take the case of President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt, he was enormously honored in India, and I think he had the courage to say to Churchill that he would have to give India independence. He became a very great figure there.

And Mrs. Roosevelt even more so. And I had something to do with her going to India, and writing a book called The Awakening of India and the East.

Riess: How were you involved?

G.B. Lal: This is what happened: after the President's death, Truman made her [Eleanor Roosevelt] a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations. And it must have been around 1949. At that time I was the chairman of the advisory committee for scholarships of the Watumull Foundation--they are rich people, American, but they live in Honolulu. So, I made the suggestion that, "You cannot do anything better than to ask Mrs. Roosevelt to go and visit India."

"Well, how do we reach here?"

I said, "I'll reach her, that's no problem." She was a neighbor of mine in New York, living in Washington Square, the other side. I was on the East side, she was on the West side. So, through Mr. Basil O'Connor, a friend of President Roosevelt's, very close, almost a member of the family, I said, "Please introduce me to Mrs. Roosevelt," which he did. We had an hour's talk, and I said, "Go and see the East." She said she would like that very much, but she would also like to go to China.



G.B. Lal: Now this was before 1949, this was late 1948. I said, "That's no problem. You will be financed completely."

Then I made the mistake of telephoning to Mrs. [Vijayalakshmi] Pandit, who was the Indian ambassador in Washington. She took the ball out of my hands. She called up Nehru, and Nehru said, "She [Mrs. Roosevelt] is going to be my guest. Who the hell are you?" [laughing] Then this appealed to President Truman. He said, "Yes, we'll make her our delegate too."

She couldn't go to China, because by the time she started China became communist. But she did go to Israel. She spent most of the time in India. She visited Pakistan. She visited Afghanistan. And she wrote that Afghanistan was getting to be communist, back in 1950! I've got her book here.

She wrote that now that China is out of our hands that India is the greatest asset for us to build up the relations with the East and the West and everything else. That book is worth reading. I am going to say, I do what little mischief I can when the time comes--and this was an example.

Riess: That was a good story. And I hope you are not keeping secret any other such influential moves in your life.

G.B. Lal: I've done quite a few, my dear. Some I won't talk of.

Riess: Making those connections between people is very important.

#### A Military Treaty with India

G.B. Lal: Well, one thing else I'll tell you, and it's an open secret so no problem:

I think it was in 1961, at the start of the Chinese-Indian war--and Kennedy was now President--and the Chinese attacked India, whatever happened, the China-Indian wars broke out. All of the Indians of course were in trouble. And I was at that time writing for the Hearst paper in Los Angeles, the Herald-Examiner. I went to some scientific meetings in New York, that were held in Princeton. Then I came to the office to pay my respects to Mr. Hearst. You know, the publisher. And this was just the time of this China war business brewing. So he said to me, "Well, Lal, what do you think of this war business, this China and India affair?"



G.B. Lal: I said, "Very simple. Make a military treaty with India and help her." Bluntly I said this.

"Will Nehru do that?"

I said, "Let's try it. How do I know what he will do? But you ask my opinion."

He said, "I hate Nehru. I don't like him. I don't like him." (He was very much in favor of Pakistan, and Pakistan was saying, "Don't help India.") So he asked me if I knew a certain ambassador to Pakistan in the United Nations. I said I did. "Why don't you go and interview him?" I said he was a first-class Machiavellian and I wouldn't trust a word of him, and what would we get out of him for this? He didn't have authority.

"All right, all right," [imitating high-pitched voice of Hearst], "you go and write a memorandum to me." So I sat down and wrote a long memorandum in which this is what I said: I said if the Chinese, who were at that time still collaborating with Russia, and the Russians, both get hold of the Indian Ocean, which they can do if India is not sent any assistance, then what on earth do you think is going to happen to you, your country? You will lose the Indian Ocean and probably the world's most central position.

I kind of got it stuck in his head. So he wrote an article in the editorial column on a Sunday, named me, said, "My science editor, Lal, made the suggestion," that if both Pakistan and India become allied with us it would be a wonderful thing, and so on and so on. He boosted it, and the damned thing went all over the country because it was syndicated.

Well, that had quite a stirring effect. In New York the Indian ambassador--

Riess: You wrote it, or he wrote it?

G.B. Lal: He wrote it. It was his article. He mentioned my name and gave me credit.

The idea was new. Some of my newspaper friends were going to kid me, and I said, "Well, that's my business."

What happened? I didn't know what happened, except that B.K. Nehru, who was Indian ambassador in New York City, cousin of the prime minister, a very influential man, he was there, and he said, "That's a wonderful article, Lal, very helpful for us, but of course we can't change our policy of neutrality," or whatever they called it.



G.B. Lal: I said, "I don't make your policies, but I don't hesitate to give my ideas. I want India and America to get together. I can't stand the bickering." I said, "If you want aid for a particular event like this, then make a lasting, enduring relationship of some kind, so that we can act upon [sic] each other." That's what I said to him.

He must have done something immediately. The next thing that happens is some years afterwards. Galbraith wrote a book called Ambassador's Diary,\* and there one of the diary items was that about a week after this Sunday editorial that Hearst published with my name, the Indian official in Washington advised their government to go and make an alliance. In other words, B.K. Nehru must have done it; who else could it be? And they did go down to see Galbraith and proposed that we make an alliance. [laughing] That's an example of my mischief! All a matter of record.

Riess: Very good.

#### Sympathy with the Struggle

G.B. Lal: My dear, what I am trying to say is, I have always considered it not an exact analogy, but a good deal of analogy between the condition of India--I'm not talking about the scale and all of that--and that of the Jewish people: how they became a power I watched very carefully and I have had friends among them right from my days at Berkeley. I have very close sympathy with them, specially these rebels from Russia and so forth who came here. Some of them were my very closest friends, like Anna Strunsky Walling. I knew her so long; she treated me just like a member of the family.

So, these are great movements and causes. And I saw that people were degraded, and treated unjustly, and I began to write about their efforts. And that to me, as you've heard me say many times, is the cause of my optimism. Keep going. Don't bother about what anybody else says. It's important to make up your mind and go ahead. And that's why I like the Israelis. Not that I agree with all the things they do or don't do, but the firm belief that they are going to get their country, and the struggle for it, and way they go ahead, has changed the psychology of all the Jewish people everywhere in the world.

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\*Ambassador's Journal, by John Kenneth Galbraith, Houghton-Mifflin, 1969.



Riess: But you are politically neutral.

G.B. Lal: Political parties, not in political philosophy. I'm never neutral in political philosophy. I am committed to the policies of freedom. I always repeat, I believe in two things, the cause of freedom and the cause of scientific culture, and to me these two have to go together. And this is something not easy to grasp if you are not familiar with either of these terms, what the hell they mean. But that is honestly my belief, and I have never deviated from it. I grew into it after a lot of study and struggle and writing and all that stuff, but today that's my creed. I'm not a nationalist in the narrow sense of the word.

##

G.B. Lal: I'm a staunch supporter of all forms of feminism, no matter how ridiculous some of the consequences may be. That's true of every movement, when those who have no power and no opportunity begin to get a little, they do good things, they do crazy things. In the end, they raise the status.

Riess: Feminism is another form of freedom.

G.B. Lal: Same as freedom of workers, freedom of scholars, freedom of children from parents, parents from children. All these are the spectrum of freedom, which means that an human individual be given as good a chance as possible in society to develop the best of his talents and then serve the greater society. That's my idea of freedom. Freedom means to choose, to make your own decisions. Not just to take orders, and commands, and salute and do like robots. That's not freedom.

Riess: Is America then the place where you would choose to live to enjoy those freedoms?

G.B. Lal: I like Americans, and I also know their faults.

Riess: America at least has freedom.

G.B. Lal: America is a new country, learning, has done a wonderful job in two hundred years. It's become the world's top figure. And it is probably a pain in the neck to Europeans whose empires it has taken over. [following is as transcribed] But they did not make the mistake of directly ruling. . .the position of the British, the French, and so forth...ousted them out...and trying to get them to develop on their own. . . That's a great and generous thing about America.

As for a lot of fools who shout "murder and revenge," and I've seen the horrors of racism in this country and the hatred of the Germans in the First World War, the Second World War, and the



G.B. Lal: persecution of the Jews, all of that, I understand wholly. But despite all of the bites of the mosquitoes [laughter] the whole thing has risen enormously. You are a far better people than you ever were before. Your universities which were called colleges in those days when I went there, why they are one of the world's most choicest universities today. People come from all over here.

So my hope for America--if we can influence the man in power today from refraining from destruction, that's all I'm going to say.



## XII NEHRU AND GANDHI

Jawaharlal Nehru

Riess: We were talking about Nehru earlier. Did you know Nehru personally?

G.B. Lal: Of course I knew Nehru, I knew him very well, I knew him, I knew his sister, I knew the whole family, I knew Mrs. Gandhi, I knew her children, I had dinners in the home, lunch with Mr. Nehru, exclusively for three or four hours. I am close as one can be, to a leader of a great people.

Riess: When did you get to know him?

G.B. Lal: The first time -- well, Nehru was about three weeks younger than I am. He was born the same year that I was born. He is my generation. The first time I met Nehru was in March 1939, and that was the first time I revisited India, for a month or so, after being away about twenty-seven years, something like that. I interviewed him, I spent time with him, I spent an hour with Mahatma Gandhi, I spent an hour with Mr. Jinnah, one of the greatest leaders of India. And I published Mahatma Gandhi's interview right in every Hearst paper here. They know me there.

Riess: What kind of conversations did you have with these people?

G.B. Lal: That's a good question. Nehru, that was a little more subtle, he wanted to know what kind of people Americans are, what kind of a man Harry Truman is, and deep politics. Why did Roosevelt let him become his successor rather than Henry Wallace? Things like that. I won't go into that, dear, that's dangerous ground.

Riess: It was an exchange of ideas, that was the kind of conversation?

G.B. Lal: Not only that, I wanted to be helpful to them from my viewpoint. I asked Mr. Nehru, as soon as I saw him, I said, "Please, come right over to the United States. We want you to meet the President.



G.B. Lal: We will arrange for you to meet President Roosevelt." He never forgot that. (He told me that afterwards.) But he was very busy with affairs and couldn't come. Whatever it was. Anyway, I put that thought in mind.

He wanted to understand something about Harry Truman: why didn't Dewey win the election? Something like that. Usual questions. But he had no interest in Dewey. He just wanted to know what is the mechanics of American elections. I said, apart from the feeling of reaction from the war, that Truman pretended that he was a friend of the common people, he would help controlling the rents and things like that--mind you [those promises were] not worth a damn, but that's not the issue and that's what I told him. There was a certain amount--he [Nehru] knew much more about American politics than I did, of course.

I said I wanted him to make an alliance with America. I couldn't say it in a blunt way, but I did all I could. There was an ambassador, another Indian ambassador sitting there, for lunch. And Nehru dismissed him afterwards, after lunch was over.

But during the lunch he said, "When are the Americans going to start the war with Russia?" I said, "Americans won't start the war, but they will come and finish it." He said, "Who will start the war?" I said, "Your friend Churchill, he's the guy who will start the war if the war ever comes."

Mr. Nehru got a little irritated and he said, "Well, if America won't start the war, there won't be any war. You take my word for it!" That's the way we talked. [laughter] He controlled himself, and afterwards talked with me for two or three hours.

A very nice man, a wonderful man. He had me to a garden party and I went down to his home to have dinner. Elegant man, highly aristocratic. I wanted such a wonderful man to be influential in American politics. I wasn't thinking only of India. I think of this country, with all the assets, and lots of jackasses here. If they made a treaty, they could come and influence these people, like the British do.

Riess: When did he finally come to this country?

G.B. Lal: He came just about a few months after that. In fact, he told me-- I had a lunch with him January 1949, and he told me that he hadn't forgotten my idea to come to America, and he said, "Now, I am going there."

I said, "I am very glad you are, Sir." He was very nice. He made me a guest of the nation, you know, took charge of me, made me go around the country, see things, do lectures. He made me a guest of the state.



Riess: There was no personal danger for you any more in India.

G.B. Lal: In India? My radical behavior was on behalf of emancipation in India, so I had become a hero there.

Riess: Were you known for that?

G.B. Lal: Sure, wherever I would go they would treat me as a very special person. You see, you are making a mistake of categories. We don't think of [labels], or give a damn about [whether] you call somebody a "revolutionist" or "anti-revolutionist" or "liberal" or "anti-liberal." But rather, what was the essential purpose? To get rid of one unrighteous phase of history, which was the domination of foreign rule. That's all I was concerned with.

I would use any tactics, east, west, middle west, that I think would work. So, it didn't bother me. "How could I be consistent about making alliance with the United States, the United States makes so many mistakes?" I said, "Yes, that's all right, but it's more to the advantage of India, whatever they can get out of America, than of anybody else."

But I meant to tell them bluntly now. And it doesn't bother me in the least bit whether anybody says that's cowardly or courageous or blah-blah. It never bothers me, never bothers me, I'm a completely independent man.

You see, I live by my craft. This is very important. As to my thinking for public life, there really I'm an amateur thinker in politics. And I think freely, because nobody paid me for anything I do; I never would think of getting five cents for any of my political actions or non-actions. That's not my business, it's my love. I give a lecture in favor of women and their wonderful contribution to culture, but I don't charge them for anything.

Riess: Was Nehru a political man? Or a philosopher?

G.B. Lal: I think one of the geniuses of modern politics. Very, very political. And a very rare man, a very great and rare man. He was a great man. Once I wrote him and I said, "Your ideas are such that you should have a great country like America with technology and all that to drive. Instead of that, you've got a primitive country to run." [laughs] I wrote him that. Oh, he was a very sweet man, a very wonderful man.



Lal's Independence

G.B. Lal: As I told you, if I didn't have an independent craft to live by, what I would like I have no idea. Probably one of the run of the system, this system or that system. But I [might detect?] my business as a science-writer [as a] completely different kind of a function, for which I get paid.

Riess: What are you saying? Would you repeat that?

G.B. Lal: I say I have my work as a science writer and it gives me an independence. And political and ethical and all these things about which I do think and sometimes express myself. But it gives me an independence of feeling and argument and sometimes action. But I don't make a dime out of any of it.

People come to me: "Write a book. We'll become your follower." I say, "What? I haven't got the time to bother. I don't want any followers. I reject the idea."

Now, I'm talking to you freely. I've been asked so many times, "Why don't you write a memoir?" I shall see when I get in the mood.

Riess: When we were at the Press Club lunch I remarked to you how many people seemed to want to view you as somebody they would follow, and learn at the feet of, and so on.

G.B. Lal: Lots of them come up to me. They still respect me.

Riess: And I asked you whether you thought it was your intellect, or whether it was some mystical notion of you as an Indian.

G.B. Lal: I don't think it's anything to do with [being] Indian, my dear. At least, I hope not. I can't tell what other people think. But you'll never see the least bit of any mysticism about me.

Riess: I felt it was other peoples' notion about you.

G.B. Lal: I don't think so, because the librarian who ran that was a very smart Jewish gentleman, and he really likes books.

Riess: I think the answer to all this must be plain "No," but I'll pursue it a little more.

G.B. Lal: Yes, dear, anything you wish.



Riess: A brilliant Indian gentleman of a certain age could be seen by a certain portion of the population of this country as a pundit, just by virtue of being Indian.

G.B. Lal: Not me, no. I never took that role. Deliberately. Maybe they have some idea, I don't know. I never discuss myself with people whom I don't know intimately. I think the greatest calamity can happen to a person [doing that]. It would distress me and foul me up. I like to give my product clean and detached. I stand on my feet. I could be a shoemaker, I could be something else, but I wouldn't mix that with my beliefs about human beings.

Riess: There is a tendency in this country to look first at the human being, and second at what he does.

G.B. Lal: Well, human being is a bad word. We're all human beings. I was brought up in a home where public affairs, affairs of the government, of the state, philosophy theories like creation, evolution, were discussed all the time, in my presence. As a child I grew up with that kind of thing.

Riess: That is not the common experience in this country, and you must know that.

G.B. Lal: I am sure of it.

### Mahatma Gandhi

Riess: Tell me about meeting Gandhi. When did you see him?

G.B. Lal: At a very critical hour, time, in March, 1939. The British didn't want me to come near Gandhi. Of course. They had a detective after me all of the time. The Hearst papers wanted an interview with Gandhi--to go so far and not to talk to Gandhi, it's like going to Jerusalem and not talking to Jesus!

So, there was a difficulty [getting an appointment to see Gandhi]. He was a very busy man and he was at that time in Delhi, resting after a fast, so I called his son, and some other people I knew, and I said, "Listen, if I were a non-Indian, Gandhi would see me immediately. Why does it happen with [someone with] his own brown skin he makes such a fuss? What's the matter with him?"

This man was a newspaperman who heard me say that, and he went and told Gandhi, and Gandhi laughed and he said, "I'll make amends." So immediately I got a call, "Mahatma will see you at four o'clock in the afternoon," and so on and so on.



G.B. Lal: Well, that was a wonderful opportunity. First I put down in writing three or four questions I wanted to ask him. And he gave me written answers. Then we had an hour's talk, open and free, and that was very fine.

Riess: Where was he when you met? What was he doing?

G.B. Lal: We were in a garden, sitting on a bed, white sheets and pillows, and he had [?] Patel, one of his closest disciples, and a woman by the name of Madame Rani Amritkauer [?] who had taken down notes---every word was taken down.

Riess: Who was she?

G.B. Lal: She was on his staff.

It was a most remarkable thing. And I suddenly realized what a great man he was. I had lots of prejudice about him, reading papers and so on---fasts---I couldn't figure out.

A very shrewd, able, civilized statesman, great psychologist--I would call him one of the greatest psychological technologists of his time.

Riess: What made you change your thinking about him?

G.B. Lal: By talking to him, by looking at him. His truthfulness, exactitude, his rationality, his courtesy, his courage, his self-confidence.

Riess: Did he, like Nehru, ask you about the United States?

G.B. Lal: Yes. "What do Americans think of us?"

I said, "Mahatmaji, there are some Christians who think you may be another Jesus. And I know one great Jewish leader"--Albert Einstein--"who compared you with Moses."

So he smiled, and he said, "Well, that's a very high recognition."

I said, "Yes, but for us, the rest of us, I think they have contempt. Here are 200,000 Englishmen, and you have 400 million--drive them out! What are you waiting for?"

Riess: Ah hah. Wasn't that a risky thing to say?

G.B. Lal: I told him that. I wasn't worrying about what was the right thing to say. That was what I believed. When would I [ever again] get a chance like that to talk to a man like that. He was a very great man. I greatly admired him.



Some Thoughts of an Ordinary Person

G.B. Lal: I suddenly realized that some people, unless you see them you don't really get--same with Einstein, a few glimpses of him that I caught in his home, afterward in Princeton, that straightened me out about the man, in my opinion, that he was a really great person. Not just a mathematician, but something else, a leader of mankind. Rightly or wrongly, that's the way I feel. I know lots of clever people, craftsmen. But there is a world of difference between a first-class artist and a mere craftsman; somebody can take a photograph with a camera and take a man's picture, and somebody can create a picture.

Anyway, these people have changed history. The test is, you make a change in the habits, the customs and the needs of mankind.

Riess: Have you ever met any great Russian leaders?

G.B. Lal: Yes, the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Dr. Alexander [A.P.] Alexandrov. He was the outstanding man in the theory of how life arose out of no life. He visited here. I never went to Russia, so I don't know any Russians there.

Riess: Did you ever meet Lenin?

G.B. Lal: No, I didn't, I couldn't. The circumstances.

Riess: I'm trying to think of other men whose thinking changed mankind.

G.B. Lal: No, honey, I'm a very ordinary person. How would I?

Riess: But you had your friend Hearst.

G.B. Lal: My friend Hearst didn't send me around there, but I did make use of him. [laughing] Did you see a letter I have here from him? [William R. Hearst, Jr.]

Riess: Yes, a nice letter very admiring of your writing.

G.B. Lal: Yes, it just came the other day. He is very friendly. It's sweet of him.

[after interruption to read letter] To be active in American politics, let us say, I would have to join this or that organized party, but since I am not good enough to do any good there, except "Yes, sir, yes, sir." I maintain my own independence, and do whatever I could through my occasional dashes in newspaper writing. But essentially that's all there is to it. I have a definite



G.B. Lal: ideal, as I've told you so many times. I would like to see a world of education and freedom, and not of cutthroat and dangerous domination. That's all. I don't care who's going to help us. I don't know!

Riess: How many times did you go back to India? First 1939--

G.B. Lal: That was the first time. Then I went end of 1948, three months, to March, 1949. Then after that I was invited in 1966. Then two years later, Mrs. [Indira] Gandhi invited me, said they wanted to give me an honor--and would I accept it, and I said I would be highly honored. So I went there in 1969. Then in 1971 I went there visiting and I had a long interview with Mrs. Gandhi and I wrote an article about her. And then in 1976 was the last time.

Riess: You still have family there?

G.B. Lal: Oh yes. And I just got a letter from the grandson of one of my brothers. The kid has been picked out--he's a technologist, learning technology--sent down to Singapore, and Japan and Bangkok. His letter is full of patriotic fire, "Come and serve the country. Bring up technology."

If I wanted to go back to India I could with no trouble, I could live very comfortable. Among the circles in which I grew up, they are now the elite and rulers of India, and I am quite sure their enlightenment and achievement is of a very high order. So many have become scientists, so many have become statesmen, so many have become high government officials, ambassadors and so forth.

Especially southern India, which was completely non-existent, has become one of the major nations of the world. There is not a country of any kind worth mentioning where they don't have their diplomatic representation, and honored everywhere in the world. All of this people had to do was to come up from my kind of people--my whole set-up, middle-class, educated people. This is a particular kind of people. Same here. This country is run by middle-class educated people.

Riess: Middle-class educated people don't have the goals here that inspire middle-class educated Indians, I think. There is less apparent purpose here.

G.B. Lal: Well, that depends on the fate of history. These Americans are the descendents of the great people who fought the British and liberated the country, men like Thomas Jefferson--I still read his writings. They had plenty of purpose then, God knows, two hundred years ago. After two hundred years, Indians will be Chinese--[laughing] I have no idea!



G.B. Lal: You [Americans] have become fixed in that category and achieved top position in the world so you don't have to worry about that. Now you should move up to the concept of how to create a world order in which justice prevails and all people get a chance to develop and work and help each other.

Riess: One of the great threats to peace is the India-Pakistan relationship.

G.B. Lal: In the great horizon of history, that's small. Because idiots will fight each other. Either Pakistan takes over all India--which I don't believe--then all right, they can unify India their way. If they get beaten, then India will absorb them. It doesn't bother me, they are one people, just like the Canadians and the Americans. You see, the difference is not--you look at any kind of Pakistani, you can't tell whether Pakistani or Indian, nobody can tell. They are the same people. The difference depends upon what part of the country they are from. Religion has nothing to do with it; that was done by the British to divide us, very much like in Ireland, very much the same in Pakistan. "Divide and rule." They always do that and they succeed. So what shall I say about them? That's the policy, you see.

I hope that you young people, even if you go wrong, do take an optimistic view. Otherwise you will have no purpose. The negative means, "Well, we can't do anything, well, go to sleep."

##

Transcriber: Steven A. Wartofsky  
Final Typist: Catherine Winter



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## POPULARIZATION OF SCIENCE THROUGH NEWS

GOBIND BEHARI LAL

Reprinted from PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE  
Vol. 12, No. 2, April, 1945

*Made in United States of America*



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*Made in United States of America*

Reprinted from *PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE*  
Vol. 12, No. 2, April, 1945

## POPULARIZATION OF SCIENCE THROUGH NEWS\*

GOBIND BEHARI LAL

During these five war years science has proclaimed and demonstrated its role as Hercules. It has employed as its loudspeaker the bursting bomb, and as its courier the swift vehicle. Its blows have been instantly lethal.

Next, science has shown its skill as the fabricator of useable goods. And, lastly the giant has revealed some of its mild and even compassionate moods as the binder of man's mortal wounds and the healer of his fevers and mental aberrations.

All these exploits of science have been made known to the world as "news."

In this kind of journalism this country has excelled all other countries. The American people, better than any other people, have been provided with intelligent, interesting and trustworthy war science news.

This has been due in no small measure to the fact that in the interval between the two world wars there had grown up in the United States a new branch of journalism—science news reporting and interpretation.

It will be remembered that the meeting of the American Association For The Advancement Of Science in Dallas, Tex., was held under a somber pall of post-Pearl Harbor forebodings. Among us science newsmen there was a feeling that the light of science might go off the printed pages, as long as the conflict raged.

If the war-time developments of science—rockets, new fuels, synthetic rubbers and plastics, radars, electron microscopes, polaroids, antibiotic and germicidal drugs, shock treatments—continued to be given out as news it was because the science newsmen were on the job—both in the offices of the government and in the editorial offices.

Men of science might feel gratified that the American journalist has done his share in beating the tom-toms of science and its technology. But, if the proper function and the potentialities of the news as the agency of making a "Science Of The People, For The People and By The People" are to be understood, a clear conception of the nature of news must be maintained.

Some day the prehistorian will reveal how the journalists of thousands of years ago spread the news of impending danger—such as the attack by a hostile tribe or pack of man-eating beasts—by sounds and gestures and pictorial markings left on bones, stones and the cave-walls.

\* Presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Meeting, Sept. 13, 1944, Cleveland, O.



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Anyway the communication of information which might be of vital importance to his fellow human beings has always been the core of the newsman's function.

It is the very essence of such communication that it be "timely"—"better be slightly ahead of an event than be behind it." Such is the 4th dimension of news—the "newsiness, the newness" of any legitimate news.

When the tendency of the journalist to be futuristic becomes contaminated by some egotism or dogmatism, not warranted by objectivity, his assertions and predictions can do plenty of harm to the people.

Walter Lippmann, the famous journalist, in his book, "A Preface to Morals," published in 1929—only three to four years before Hitler took hold of Germany and Japan started the conquest of China—wrote this:

"It is no accident that fascism or bolshevism took root in Italy and Spain, but not in Germany and England . . . in Russia but not in Scandinavia, in China but not in Japan." And, "Bolshevism and fascism are, as we say, un-American. They are no less un-Belgian, un-German, un-English. For they are un-industrial" (pages 253-254).

This, of course, was the interpretation of current and near future history by a noted journalist, not strict reporting.

How startling it sounds today to be told that "fascism is un-German and un-Japanese."

I wonder if such prophecies and affirmations were a factor in that negligence which has brought about the greatest war in history.

And, I feel dismayed to think of what might be in store for us in the future if such predictions continue to shape the course of history.

If there were more of the spirit and method of science in journalism, and in the great affairs of mankind, there would be less waste of man's energies, and less sacrifice of his life and happiness.

But, let us analyze the substance of news a little further. In addition to "timeliness," the core news must have some thing of "power."

An "Atom of News" is short-lived and rhythmic in time—daily or weekly and so on—and it radiates some kind of power.

The historian and the sociologist can think of power—in the social sense—as some thing which enables one person to influence the attitudes and actions of some other person or persons. If you can make me do what you want me to do, then you have power—which may be of military, civil official authority, money, learning, religion, propaganda, even art, and surely science.

If any news is not forward-looking in time, it is "old stuff, stale": if it lacks potentialities of power, it is weak. Even news of playful reactions and activities have to do with power transactions of human beings.

Now, the concept of power, I believe, is at the basis of the concept of freedom. Any form of freedom implies the possibility of action, according to one's own choice—spontaneously made.

The greater the range of choice in action, the greater the degrees of freedom in that particular energy field. *The absence of power leaves us in a minus state of freedom.*



Ideally speaking, then, the "Atom of News" is packed with potentialities of power and hence of freedom.

In the history of no other country is this seen more clearly than of America.

A couple of years ago, Philip Guedella, the British historian, stated at the Royal Institution of Great Britain: "Through all New World history a single motive runs like a refrain: Man Will Be Free."

Franklin, Jefferson, and Paine were not only among the famous architects of republican freedom, but also scientific philosophers and able pamphleteers—the journalists of their day.

As is well known, it always makes good news when it is associated with some great man's or woman's name. In weighing the power for freedom of any news the trained journalist never forgets the importance of personality.

Why? Because a trustworthy and honorable person's name inspires credence. What good is news emanating from a liar or a fraud?

Scientific news, then, has to be *timely, significant for history* charged with some power capable of safe-guarding and increasing *some form of human freedom*, and carrying the impress of as trustworthy *personal authority* as possible.

When the substance of science comes in such a form that its energy significance is obscure, it is poor stuff for turning into news.

Obscurity in the statement of facts and in the enunciation of desirable human goals has been the mark of every system calculated to hold human beings in slavery, weakness and ignorance. It is a characteristic of the mediaeval, the opposite of the modern, pattern.

When those who know are incapable of, or unwilling to, communicate truth to the people, the latter seek information from any source which seems accessible, often quackery.

The end of the first world war was a time when there was a new and tremendous upsurge of democracy. Everywhere men and women, who until then hardly had any power, acquired influence and prestige.

But these new ruling groups did not receive the light of science and the guidance in public affairs which they sorely needed. They were allowed to fall into the hands of charlatans. Thus, during the last quarter century this world was plunged into a new mediadevalism—the Middle Ages of the Machine.

In England the brilliant writer, E. M. Forster bewailed: "Science, which ought to have ruled, plays the subservient pimp."

He failed to perceive that, under the new condition, mainly created by scientific technology itself, "science could rule" only if it became the possession of the common man.

Let me call your attention to the fact that the "Atlantic Charter" does not list science among the several freedoms for which we are supposed to have been waging this war.

Don't you agree with me that, as long as freedoms were being promised, the "Fifth Freedom Of Science For All The People Of The World" "should also have been included in the Atlantic Charter?"

It goes to show how weak the science movement of the world has been. To-



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day, even in this country it is not yet quite a movement of the people, hence its "secondary place" in the hierarchy which the powers that be are building up.

Science news is the connecting link between science and democracy. It is one of the great synthesizers of a Scientific Democracy, and of a Democratic Science. These are not precise terms, but I hope they convey my purport.

Can you tell me any other agency so closely related to the people as is American journalism?

Here and there are papers and periodicals which ape the "court gazettes" of moth-eaten monarchic and other such prehistoric social systems. But, on the whole the American Press has been a marvelous power for democratic freedom.

So far American journalism has shown great deference to scientists. And, when the "boys come back home" from the fighting fronts, where they have handled and lived with the weapons science has given them to win the war, the American newspapers will be all the more inclined to give science a play.

Science, like other assets of civilization, has suffered in this war, not in its technical skill but in its spontaneity, its self-motivated creative activity. But also there are new gleams of a broader culture of science.

It is true that Europe, from Paris to Warsaw, has been so ravaged that science has practically been smothered there.

But, in Russia, India, China and other of the United Nations, which were sluggish in science and technology, powerful new forces of science, pure and applied, have risen.

The achievements of Russian science, not only of the old masters like Pavlov, but also of the new leaders like Kapitzka, are beginning to be known to us. Science news writers have done their share in making the work of these Russian luminaries known to the American people.

India's science has been a leader of Asian science, and after the collapse of Japan will be more so than ever before.

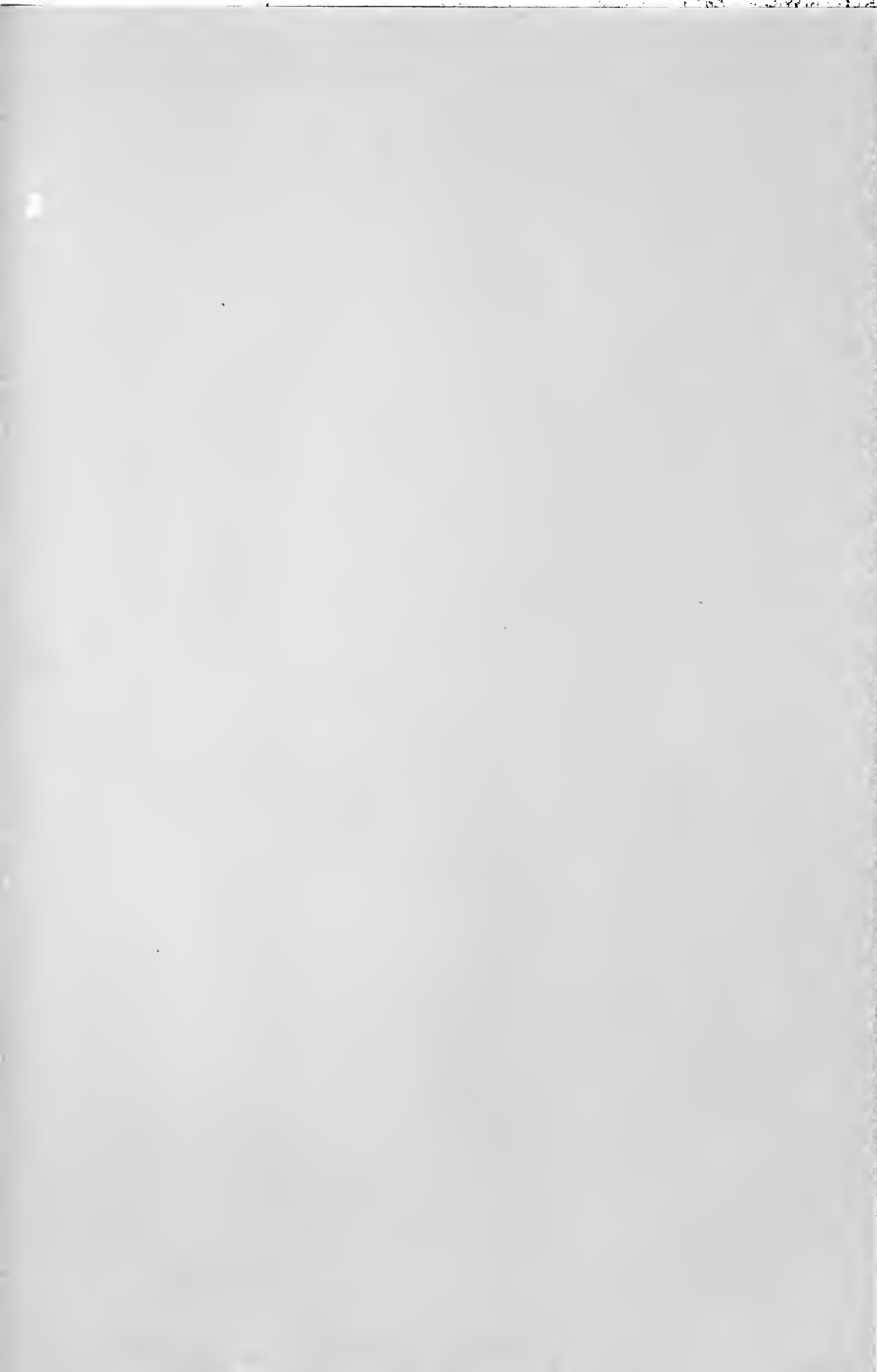
Under the Bombay Plan, worked out by the Indian industrialists, ten to thirty billion dollars will be spent towards the industrialization of India, which would include the extension of scientific research, education and culture.

The American scientists, pure and technical, with the collaboration of the American and other freedom loving newspapers and periodicals, can attempt the rebirth of world civilization with a new hope of success, emanating from the powers of science. They can rally around them, and fully cooperate with the scientific forces of not only Britain, Russia and China, but also India, Latin American and other countries, especially of the United Nations.

As the process of scientific civilization and culture building goes forward, science news too will grow in importance and usefulness.

*1 University Place, New York City.*







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are part of the science called physics.

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by a prize-winning science writer.

# W<sup>•</sup>ONDERLAND

By GOMIND BEHARI LAL

Science Editor Emeritus, Hearst Newspapers

**A** YOUNG QUEEN RIDING in her golden carriage... astronauts soaring in outer space... each is compact matter in action. A dazzling diamond... the blazing sun... the silvery planets... are other forms of matter, with motions both seen and unseen. Material objects can be assigned to three sizes:

- **BIG ONES**—such as the galaxies of billions of stars.
- **MEDIUM ONES**—such as mountains and men.
- **LITTLE ONES**—such as the viruses of diseases, molecules, atoms and electrons... all invisible to the human eye.

Whatever their size, all material things throughout the universe are of the same matter. Metals found on earth are identical to metals in the stars. The hydrogen and oxygen elements of water are the same elements in the sun.

Such **ONENESS** of all matter, the material unity of the universe, is one of the most important concepts in "The Wonderland of Physics."

For all matter is composed of the same electricity—the two kinds of electric charges called "positive and negative" since the time of Benjamin Franklin. Rubbing materials against each other often separates their electric charges. Rub a glass rod with a silk handkerchief. Each will become charged, one positive, the other negative. Like charges, positive or negative, repel each other. But positive and negative charges attract each other.

A million or more forms of matter, differing in chemical properties, are known to the chemist. But modern physics has shown they are **ALL** made of positive and negative electric charges, in different amounts, and some uncharged, electrically neutral, constituents.

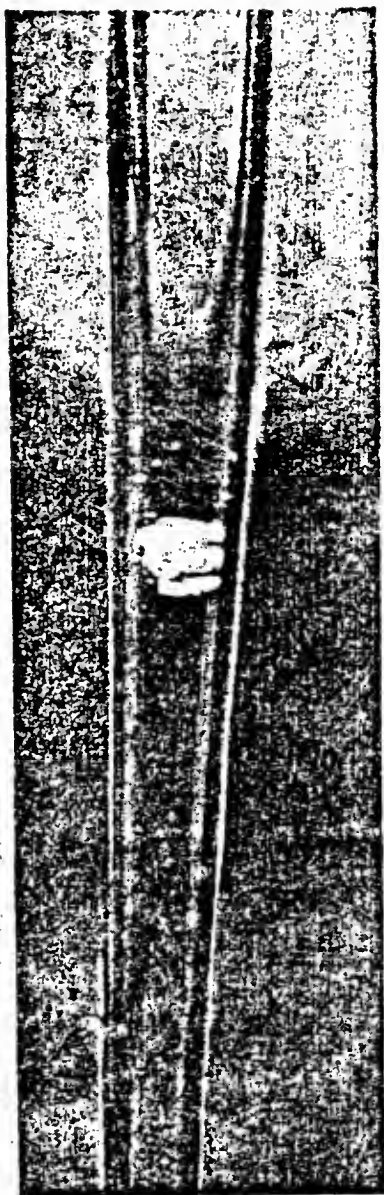
**CHEMISTRY** finds it useful to distinguish ordinary materials into two classes: **ELEMENTS** and **COMPOUNDS**. Water is a compound, not an element. It is a combination of two elements—hydrogen and oxygen. The smallest portion of an element is called an **ATOM** of that **ELEMENT**. Every atom of the particular variety of an element is just like any other atom. The smallest portion of a compound, retaining the chemical properties of the material in bulk, is called its **MOLECULE**. The molecules of a particular substance are all alike in their atomic composition.

In the case of helium and a few other elements, their atoms serve as molecules. But for most substances, a molecule is made of a combination of two or more atoms, which may be of the same element or any number of different elements. One molecule of table salt, for example, is the simple combination of one atom of the element sodium and one atom of the element chlorine. On the other hand, many varieties of the molecules of the human body are built of thousands, even millions of atoms.

But while the body of an adult consists of about ten thousand million million million atoms, the kinds of atoms are relatively few.

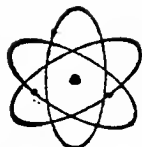
So far, 103 elements have been definitely established. The 103rd was built by welding lighter elements by scientists of the University of California at Berkeley. It was named **LAWRENCIUM** in honor of the late E. O. Lawrence, inventor of the cyclotron.

**RETURNING TO THE** electric ingredients of matter, hence of the atoms, we must give close attention to the electric charges of each kind of atom. Each element is given a code number, called its **ATOMIC**



**PHOTOGRAPH** of the first pure californium compound isolated at the University of California's radiation laboratory. Consisting of three ten-mil. bombs of a gram of californium oxychloride, the compound was isolated and identified by Drs. Burris B. Cunningham and James C. Wallman using new techniques of chemical analysis on a virtually microscopic scale. Sample, magnified 170 times, is contained within a fused quartz tube and emits its own type of light as a result of decay from radioactivity.





## F PHYSICS

**NUMBER.** This is the number of negative (and equal number of positive) electric charges the atom contains.

Hydrogen has atomic number 1: That is, a hydrogen atom has just one negative electric charge particle, called an electron, balanced by just one positive electric charge, called a proton. Lawrencium has atomic number 103: Its atom contains 103 electrons and 103 protons.

Whether or not an atom will unite with some other atom depends upon its electrons, which are like the atom's "fingers" by which two or more atoms can grip one another to form molecules.

**ANOTHER CODE NUMBER** of an element is its **ATOMIC WEIGHT NUMBER**, representing the "amount of matter," as measured in units of mass or weight. Lighter elements, such as hydrogen, helium, or lithium, have smaller atomic weights than do heavier elements such as gold, radium or uranium. But all the atoms of a particular element do not have the same **ATOMIC WEIGHT**!

While all hydrogen atoms have the same **ATOMIC NUMBER**, representing one electron for one hydrogen atom, three different weight varieties of hydrogen atoms are known. The first and most common hydrogen atom has atomic weight 1; a heavier type, deuterium, has atomic weight 2; the still heavier, tritium, has atomic weight 3. In making the "hydrogen bomb," deuterium and tritium are used.

The element uranium has atomic number 92: All its atoms have 92 electrons and 92 protons. But from the viewpoint of atomic weight, there are four varieties of uranium atoms: 233, 234, 235, 238; and atom bombs can be made only from uranium atoms of atomic weights 233 and 235.

**THE DIFFERENT WEIGHT** varieties of the atoms of a particular element are the **ISOTOPES** of that element. So far we have mentioned three isotopes of hydrogen and four of uranium. There are known to be "isotopes" of practically all the elements. In addition to those found in nature, scientists have created many kinds of isotopes—some of great importance in research, diagnosis and treatment of diseases.

This has led us to two kinds of isotopes, two kinds of atoms: **STABLE** and **UNSTABLE**. Stable atoms do **NOT** change. An unstable atom changes by itself: One element transmutes itself into another element. In changing itself the unstable atom's nucleus, or core, expels a particle or wave, or both, which carries out energy. Such energy emission is called **RADIOACTIVITY**, spectacularly exemplified by the atoms of radium which give off three kinds of radiations.

Isotopes of any element which display radioactivity are called the **RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES** of that element.

One isotope of uranium, U-235, has become famous because it was the atom out of which atomic energy was first unleashed. When a neutron (without electric charge) penetrates the nucleus of this atom, the atom splits and some of its matter is changed into free atomic energy.

In all that has been said about matter so far there is this great truth:

**THE BOOKKEEPING OF MATTER AND ENERGY IS FAULTLESS.**

There is "conservation of mass-energy" and "conservation of the electric charge." Conservation means that no matter what changes take place, the total amount of matter and energy neither increases nor decreases.

**NEXT SUNDAY**—A look at motion and a "revolution" about it. Assure yourself of receiving the complete series on "The Wonderland of Physics." Call The Examiner, Richmond 8-1864 for home delivery.

# Atomic Age Glossary

**atom** (at-um), n. The smallest part of an element, capable of entering into chemical reactions, retaining the property of the element.

**atomic number** (a-tom-ik num-ber), n. The number of electrons which revolve around the nucleus of any atom; also the number of the protons in the nucleus.

**atomic weight** (a-tom-ik wat), n. The mass of the atom of a particular element.

**compound** (korn-pound), n. A substance composed of the chemical combination of two or more elements.

**electron** (e-lek-tron), n. The particle of electricity with the smallest negative charge; its opposite is the positron, with a positive charge.



**element** (el-e-ment), n. A substance which cannot be broken down by chemical methods into simpler substances.

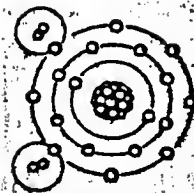
**isotopes** (i-so-top), n. Atoms of the same element which differ in atomic weights, but have the same atomic number. Radioactive isotopes change by themselves and give off radiations.

**mass** (mas), n. The quantity of matter.



**matter** (mat-er), n. Anything that takes up space. Liquid, solid or gas.

**molecule** (mol-e-kul), n. The smallest amount of a substance which can exist independently, having the properties of that substance; mostly the smallest amount of a compound.



**neutron** (nu-tron), n. Slightly heavier than a proton, but without any charge.

**proton** (pro-ton), n. Nearly 1837 times as heavy as an electron, but carrying a unit charge of positive electricity.







## AMA Distinguished Layman Winner

# Science Editor Lal Calls MD

## Key to Modern Ethics

"Medical science is the basis of human conscience, and the physician is the key man of modern ethics. He's the only one left who is pledged not to destroy life."

Gobind Behari Lal made this pungent observation. He is Science Editor Emeritus of the Hearst News service, and in his 75 years he has seen and written enough to be vehement in expressing his belief.

A small, soft-spoken man with traces of his native India in his accent, Lal is covering this 16th Clinical Meeting of the AMA as he has covered countless other scientific gatherings throughout the nation.

The success with which he works is noted in the fact that he earned the AMA Distinguished Layman award in 1958, an honor he treasures along with his Pulitzer Prize of 1937 and a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1955.

### Came to U.S. in 1912

Lal pioneered science reporting with the Hearst chain, but he did it almost accidentally. He had studied the sciences, coming to the U.S. in 1912 for post-graduate work at USC. But his social and journalistic interests had been channeled into art and literature.

As a young reporter on the San Francisco Examiner, living in what he calls the "literary Bohemia" of San Francisco, he wrote about and became good friends with H. L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson and Edna St. Vincent Millay.

And there were exclusive interviews, during the World War I years, with a young statesman named Herbert Hoover, and with the first German and British ambassadors to the United States.

It was when he covered the Scopes trial in 1925 that he detected a growing anti-science sentiment throughout the country. Because he attributed this dangerous trend partly to the mystery with which all science was shrouded, he began to steer his reporting assignments towards men and events who could give it color and life.

He wrote about Millikan's work on cosmic rays, and on Doctors Adams and Hubbles at Mt. Wilson Observatory. To the relatively small reading audience on the West Coast, the laboratory began to emerge as a source of interest.

### Gets \$500 Bonus

Lal's personal "break" and the story which put science news writing on a nationally syndicated basis was his coverage, in 1929, of the Coffey-Humber treatment of cancer. When the Hearst syndicate "cautiously published" it, and it gained world-wide attention, Lal received a \$500 bonus and was sent to New York to become the first science editor of Hearst's American Weekly and International News Service (INS).

Here he wrote daily columns for syndication throughout the vast Hearst chain, giving millions a new grasp of the wonders of science and a rather amazed delight that they understood them.

After a quarter-century in New York, Lal "retired" officially and devoted his writing to special features. Then, in 1958, "because I can't sit still," he accepted an invitation to return to California in his emeritus position with INS and the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner.

Lal's personal philosophy helped make him one of the few American writers able to write successfully about two such seemingly divers fields as science and the creative arts.

### '4 Things Necessary'

"I believe four things are necessary for modern civilized living," he says. "We need science for the discovery of truth; the creative arts for the good of our emotions; freedom in which to develop, and, finally, we need to love and serve our fellows against the common enemies of man."

"No man is complete unless he nourishes all four of these elements."

"The 'pure artist' who is without interest in the truths of science is a fool. And the scientist who cares nothing for the emotional benefits of the creative arts cannot truly understand the humans he attempts to serve."

# Bulletin

DAILY

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

Los Angeles, California, Wednesday, November 28, 1962

Volume 17







Application presented to  
John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation

by Gobind Behari Lal---

for a fellowship or grant  
to support carrying out of  
the project of a book:

[G.B. Lal became Science Editor  
Emeritus in 1954. This application  
may have been made around that time.  
There is no date with it.]

"The Moral Power of Science"

I have undertaken the preparation of a book which will attempt an exposition of the ethical aspects, influences, resources and potentialities of science. The enterprise is prompted by the conviction that science offers the most important way of bringing mankind together on a universally acceptable set of moral values.

Tentatively the book is to be called, although a better title may be found, THE MORAL POWER OF SCIENCE. In a way the theme is that science can release "moral energy" as it releases electronic and atomic energy. Science can provide that "moral equivalent" for war which modern philosophers, like ancient sages and mediaeval saints, have been looking for.

"A society that could develop atomic energy could also develop the means of controlling it," said Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer in 1947. "Surely the establishment of a secure peace is very much in all our minds. It is right that we try to bring reason to bear on an understanding of this problem....The past century has seen many valid and inspiring examples for the extension of science to new domains."

Scientists, Einstein, Bohr, Oppenheimer and others, have developed ideas of how modern physics itself opens new windows which broaden and uphold man's creativeness, personal freedom and tolerance: atomic physics, idea of complementarity and so on. Physiologists, like Dr. Cannon, have compared the chemical and nervous balancing



systems of the living animal body to a possibly healthy, secure and free society. The unity of all natural things, inanimate and half-animate (viruses) and fully alive, is being worked out by chemists.... More and more refined are methods of keeping away error from observation and theory.

Yet these tremendously ethical ideas remain a closed book to most people even in the United States. The small world of professional scientists--estimated at about 200,000 or a little more among two billion and a quarter people-- remains largely unknown to the rest of us. Specialists are cut off from each other too, the physicist from the psychologist or anthropologist.

Thus the moral gold of science remains hidden in mountains of technical erudition.

The time-honored expressions of ethics--in the religious systems, originating centuries ago in the East, in Egypt, Babylonia, Palestine, India, Arabia, China--seem alien to the expression of what science calls truths and their uses. Old science--Eastern and European--still serves as the mother of traditional ethics, of moral faiths and ardors and codes.

The East gave morals. The West, since the Renaissance, has been developing science and its applications. How are the two necessities to be wedded?

Having written thousands of scientific columns for newspapers and Sunday magazines over nearly three decades or more, I started to write the whole book myself. I know how to get the essential material from scientific literature and out of great scientists themselves and then to put it in simple language. Such has been my training and experience, especially in the Hearst syndicates--Hearst Newspapers, Universal Service, International News Service, Kings



Features Syndicate and The American Weekly.

But a previous experience suggested to me that the significance of the book would be vastly greater if I were to have noted scientists themselves write, under their signatures, in each field---each section or chapter. My own work would be to lay out a carefully considered and articulated ground plan. I would also provide a general frame in the beginning and in the end--so to say Prologue and Epilogue. That is, the things that the scientists would not want to say, even if they would like to say them, I would not hesitate to state. Mainly I believe that we are passing today through a kind of new mediaevalism, of the machine age; but there are signs of a new renaissance of the age of science. Destruction and chaos, on one side, and construction and a humane order on the other, are playing a game.

As Science Editor of The American Weekly, for ten years, especially since 1946--when the atom bombs had been exploded--I became interested in this problem:

How can science be harnessed to the cause of Goodness? In those days even the American people were passing through a phobia of war-science, other nations were saying that American scientists seemed to have atomic bombs but no conscience. What kind of men were these atomic powered scientists?

I knew the answer. They were good men. Highly moral men, most of them. I arranged for the publication of a series of articles on THE FAITH OF SCIENTISTS, with the enthusiastic sanction and support of the editor, Walter Howey. The policy of the magazine required that any statement of ethics by the contributing scientists concede some kind of religious faith too--belief in God in some conception, belief in a free, immortal human spirit. This condition kept out half the



scientists of America alone.

Still the series made a hit with 30 million readers. The scientists themselves--displaying remarkable agreement on ethical matters, love of mankind, devotion to truth, desire to see science applied to man's benefit, abolition of war--were startled by what they turned out. I had to suggest to each contributor certain basic idea patterns to work on. Although a sort of uniformity developed, as religious expression necessitated, there was plenty of variety in the treatment.

The names of the scientists carried a convincing, inspiring stimulus to the readers.

Hence I now plan to have scientists themselves write for the book I have in mind. Far from making my work light, it makes the project more difficult to work out artistically and logically.

Fortunately several great scientists have agreed to collaborate. I anticipate no difficulties.

I wish to make it quite clear that the book will make no attempt to set up a new creed, doctrine or dogma; and it will not assail any religion or philosophy. All it will attempt is as clear, warm, authentic an exposition of the various truths of science and of their social implications as possible.

Applicant:  
Gobind Behari Lal  
One University Place  
New York City 3

Telephone: Algonquin 4-6493



[undated]

## P R E F A C E

Asia and Europe have been in the habit of thinking about each other with prejudiced minds. Even today they are swayed by mutual unfriendly feelings. Such is the historic division between the East and the West, which has been deepened and poisoned by such writers as Kipling.

But for several generations they have been chained to each other--they have met and continue to meet, willingly and unwillingly. Not only the West influences the East, the latter also determines the fate of the former. More and more events occur which demonstrate this process: the Westernization of the East, and the Easternization of the West. What is the result? No Westerner can understand himself without a knowledge of the effect of the East upon his thought, feeling and active behaviour. Nor can any Oriental know himself sufficiently without a comprehension of Occidental effects upon his psychology. The East and the West are woven into each one of us, whether we be Oriental or Occidental. If we differ from one another, it is in the preponderance of the Eastern or the Western element in us.



I happen to be one of the 20th century Asians who deliberately exposed himself to Western culture and civilization from the point of view of self enrichment. And I have developed into an Eastern-Western human being, who considers it one of his major ethical obligations to make a contribution towards the friendly understanding and fruitful collaboration between the East and the West.

I was born in an upper middle class Hindu family of the City of Delhi some ten years before the death of Queen Victoria, whom Disraeli had made the Empress of India. I was a schoolboy, of about thirteen, when I saw the Coronation Durbar, held by Lord Curzon, the English viceroy, in my native city in 1902-03, to proclaim that Edward VII had become the Emperor of India. As yet the spectacle of the imperial power show of England did not stir any resentment within me. I was dazzled in a childish way by <sup>the</sup> pomp of the state procession which passed through the Chandni Chowk Bazaar. Guns boomed from the Red Fort, and English and Indian soldiers marched with glittering helmets, turbans and bayonets, to the strains of martial music. Lord and Lady Curzon rode on a richly caparisoned elephant, seated in a sort of throne, with a royal umbrella over their heads. Lord Kitchner, the Commander-in-



Chief, the conqueror of the Boers of South Africa, looked like a haughty god riding in a chariot of war. Behind these English Heads of State there came the comet's-tail of the bejewelled Indian Ruling Princes, the loyal-to-the-English Nizam, the Maharajas and the Nawabs, mounted on huge elephants decorated with gold and gems. Later, Lord Curzon made a speech in which he said, in effect, that in the hollow of the palm of the British Raj lay the destiny of the world, a statement which was heard by the representatives of Germany, Japan and America, who were present by invitation. As far as I can recall those days, young Indians like myself felt a little puffed up about belonging to such a world-swaying Raj.

But it was in a very different frame of mind that I regarded the second and last Coronation Durbar, also held in Delhi, in 1911, when King George V himself had come to our city to proclaim that he had taken his father's place as the Emperor of India. Now at the threshold of adult manhood I, with a new generation, deeply resented the presence of Englishmen as rulers in my country. In less than a decade that separated the two Durbars of this century India, the East, and England, the West, had become conscious, sophisticated antagonists. Lord Curzon, as the English viceroy, had shown a tendency to humiliate and weaken the Indian English-educated Indians, the graduates of universities, the intelligentsia. Between educated Englishmen and



## Science East-West: Preface 4

educated Indians, both English using communities, a cold war had begun; already Indians had declared that they wanted nothing less than full Swarajya, that is complete political independence from English rule.

At the high school and then at the college where I studied my senior teachers were Englishmen, graduates and good scholars from Cambridge University, and some of them became my very real friends, among them Prof. G. F. Andrews who, later, formed a close relationship with Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. From these men I learned English literature, the history of England--in which I found the part relating to the growth of the Parliament as most interesting and inspiring--modern science and so forth. None of them, however, succeeded in inducing me to change my religious and philosophic beliefs, and accept English Protestant theology instead. It was what was "modern", not what was "medieval", in the learning of the English West that I accepted with an open, even an enthusiastic mind. Acceptance of English rule was not "modern", but a "medieval" submission. In short England's Parliamentary Freedom and Modern Science, but neither imperial politics nor theology, were what Young India, like most other Young India was taken up. I felt the need of more of the oxygen of Modern Knowledge, Ideals and Techniques than there was in India.



## Science East-West: Preface      Page 5

Was I to go to Cambridge or Oxford or Edinburgh or some other university in England? The cold war between learned Englishmen and learned Indians, now and then turned into militant hot war, had reached England too, and I thought of America, about which I had heard some thing from American educational missionaries of the Forman Christian College in Lahore and from other sources. But it was not the Atlantic face of the United States which now attracted me, but the Pacific profile which was turned towards mighty China and Japan. When Japan had defeated the Russia of the Czar, all Asia had been awakened from a sleep of centuries--sleep, not death, as some Occidentals had mistakenly diagnosed. So I thought of sailing across the Indian Ocean, the Seas of China and Japan, the Pacific Ocean, and reach California. Leaving Delhi in the summer monsoon season of 1912 I took some four months, making short and long stops in Burma, Malayas, China and Japan, to land at San Francisco late in Autumn. A week later I got enrolled for higher studies at the University of California.

I was met at the dock at San Francisco by Dr. Har Dayal, one of the most brilliant Hindu intellectuals, who had made a splendid record at the University of the Punjab and then at Oxford, <sup>but</sup> ~~who~~ who had become a leading rebel against English rule in India, and now was teaching at Stanford University. He was to be my guide, friend and philosopher, through whom I soon got to know important



## Science East-West: Preface Page 6

Americans, such as Dr. David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University and a great biologist, Fremont Older, famous editor of The San Francisco Bulletin, and Mrs. Older, herself a writer, their colleague, John D. Barry, columnist, and several other social reformers, civic leaders and intellectuals. At the university, in Berkeley, I had two champions of great importance, Prof. Arthur U. Pope, of the department of philosophy, and Prof. Arthur W. Ryder, professor of Sanskrit. But all the professors under whom I studied--natural and sociological and historical sciences--showed me a very special consideration. Some of them, like Dr. Adolph C. Miller, the economist, and Dr. David P. Barrows, political scientist, were "conservative"; others, like Dr. Jessica Peixotto, Dr. Carlton Parker, Prof. Alfred C. Kroeber, the famous anthropologist, Prof. G. N. Lewis, the physicist, were "liberal". The point I am trying to stress here is that the learned Americans, unlike the learned Englishmen of that time, were sympathetic towards the modern-minded, new knowledge seeking Asians, like myself and my classmate, Sun Fo, son of Dr. Sun -Yet-San, and others of the East. As far as I was concerned, I had come to a paradise of freedom, of thought and of manners, and of warmth of human fellowship. Looking back now, I think that Berkeley, Palo Alto and even San Francisco of those pre-World War I years were a true Eden of Freedom and Democracy, not to be equaled anywhere else in the world of those days.



That "freedom", of course, faded away like a colored morning mist as Europe burst into flames. There was peaceful beauty on the campus when one of my professors asked me, "Do you think there will be a war?" I shook my head, "No! You see, if England went into a war, her Indian empire will vanish; and as for Germany, she would be crushed between England and France, on the west, and Russia on the east." But I had overestimated the brain-power of England and Germany. The First World War began, and even in California, Americans were divided from Americans; passions took hold of the minds. The big events were happening in the regions of the Atlantic, it seemed, and so I made a trip of study towards New York, and from there to England and France, in the beginning of 1915. On the way, I stopped at the University of Missouri to ~~my~~ spend a day with Dr. Thorstein Veblen, learning from him his basic ideas of an analytical study of cultures and civilizations of the past and the present. Veblen and I became good friends, and I profited greatly from this relationship. I met some of the leading thinkers and scholars of Chicago. And in New York I attended the classes of, and got to know well personally, Prof. John Dewey, the philosopher, Prof. Franz Boas, the anthropologist and other Columbia University savants. Dr. Jacques Loeb, the great biologist, showed me around what was being done at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, and he told me in his own way about his theory of the ORGANISM AS A WHOLE.



In England scholarship and intellectual life were broken up, and wartime passions were blinding. I had dinner with Ramsay MacDonald, Labor Party leader, who was in the dog house, because he had been opposed to the war, and had predicted that the war would destroy the British empire of the East. After a few months of seeing the agonies of Englishmen and Frenchmen, I returned to the United States, to Berkeley and San Francisco, where also emotions were becoming turgid. After the First World War ended, I began my career as an American newspaperman, in fulfillment of an ambition which had been stimulated and encouraged principally by my friend, Mr. Barry of the "Bulletin" (later of the "San Francisco Call"; and then of the "San Francisco Daily News"). Eventually I was taken by Mr. E. D. Coblentz, editor of "The San Francisco Examiner," on his staff, which started my life as a worker for the Hearst Newspapers System.

I could not have chosen a better way for the understanding of the American mind, culture and history, than American journalism. For my part, I am convinced that the American Press, when one works for it with a certain intellectual preparation, is one of the best experiences for an all-round perspective of our age. The brotherhood of the American newspapermen, and perhaps of all newspapermen in the present day world, is unique in its warmth, mutual help and wide-awake alertness. Great, indeed, is my debt of gratitude to my colleagues, especially of the Hearst newspapers and syndicates, who



have helped, supported, enlightened me in countless ways. As a working member of a mighty American Press Organization I was able to meet and talk freely alone with some of the most important and usually inaccessible men and women, who have made the history of our times-- among them a President of the United States, who is still living( 1957), a Crown Prince who became a King, Henry Ford and Mahatma Gandhi. But my special field of journalism became science reporting and interpreting for the newspapers I served. In the pursuit of my scientific "news", especially when I started to live and work in New York City( 1930), I traveled throughout the United States and also in England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Egypt, India and some other countries. Everywhere abroad I was aided by the chiefs of the International News Service Bureaus in meeting scientists and in visiting institutes of scientific research and development.

In 1932 I was in London, and spent a few hours with H.G.Wells, who was greatly interested in what I told him about some of the developments I had seen in the laboratories of Cambridge University--where Rutheford, Cockcroft, Frederick Gowland Hopkins were among the scientists whom I had met and talked with; and Wells said: " But your great job is to interpret the East to us of the West. You speak our language..." A few days later I was in Germany, where it was arranged that I was to be received by Prof. Albert Einstein in his residence



at Caputh-on-the Havel, a few miles from Potsdam. On the morning of September 22, 1932, in pre-Hitler Germany, I spent nearly three hours with Dr. Einstein and his wife. The scientist, still clad in a pair of blue pyjamas in which he had slept, looking like a happy cherub in the glow of the log-fire, answered the questions of a scientific nature I asked him in the simplest way. All that took less than an hour. But for two hours Dr. Einstein asked me numerous questions about the events of India, especially related to the movement of Indian independence and to the dissolution of the caste system. His deep, warm sympathy for the political, social and intellectual freedom of the peoples of India and other Asian lands was a revelation to me. Also he was very much concerned with peace. He wanted me to write in the newspapers in America that peace could not be achieved and maintained by strength of arms, but by direct giving up of war itself. Einstein the great scientist was one of the most mankind-loving men I had ever met. As I left him, in a state of mental euphoria, I had a feeling that I had made an important discovery: the discovery that Great Science and Great Ethics can live together, each strengthening the other in open and occult ways. I also now understood the full significance of what Dr. Robert A. Millikan had told me years before, "Einstein is one of the wisest of the moderns."



The next time I spent about an hour with Prof.Einstein, when no one else was present, was on March 28,1938, in Princeton, N.J., but now he was a very different, sadder man. For he must have sensed that another fight between England and Germany was in the making. Towards the end of that year Prof.Otto Hahn and two of his colleagues split the uranium atom in a laboratory in Berlin, and that was the "birth" of atomic energy. In February,1939,I made another trip of study to Europe and India. Again in Germany, now under Hitler, I interviewed Prof.Hahn, Prof.Max Planck and some other physicists. In Italy I talked with Levi-Civita, the mathematician who had been discharged from the University of Rome because he had a "Jewish ancestry", and other physicists and historians. The most important scientists I spent some hours with in Paris were the physicist Joliot, Irene Curie's husband, and Dr.Pierre Janet, famous psychiatrist. In Geneva I spent all evening with Prof.Jean Piaget,known all over the world for his studies of the psychology of children. Sir William Bragg and Dr.Thomas Brown, psychiatrist of Oxford,were among the English scientists who gave me their time. And what did I gather from these leaders of Europe's scientific culture,apart from scientific facts? Each of them had a morality which was somehow different from the morality of the majority of their fellow citizens.



compared with their attitude in moral matters of the days following the First World War, the leading American and European and Asian scientists--men like Raman, of India, and Yukawa, of Japan-- had become much more morally sensitive and vigilant as the Second World War approached; and this phenomenon was, in a large measure, associated with the ill treatment of the Jews and other religious and cultural minorities, or weaker racial communities, at the hands of some of the new political and military saviours of Europe during 1933 to 1945. Brilliant scientists had to leave their native lands to seek asylum in more generous countries, above all in the United States.

At last the Second World War was over, and the atomic bomb had been made in America and had been employed against as a weapon ~~in~~ Japan. In April, 1946, I revisited the California Institute of Technology, the Mount Wilson and the Palomar Observatory. I found Dr. Millikan very much concerned about the moral condition of the world. He told me what he believed: " Civilization depends upon two pillars--Science, as Knowledge, and Religion, as Ethics." He ~~never~~ wanted no more wars. In the ethical teaching of Jesus, in the Golden Rule, in the precept, "Love thy neighbour as thyself", Dr. Millikan had found the concept of "World Loyalty", which was needed to supplement Science. Later, Dr. Arthur H. Compton, a leader in the making of the atomic bomb, expressed the same kind of faith and philosophy. What seemed to me to be really important was not the



particular theistic or agnostic form in which the different scientists expressed their moral feelings and theories, but the fact that they had such feelings and concepts in a sufficient degree.

Now the scientists were the only brain-workers of high order who were respected for their work by all nations, Eastern or Western. Science--and not religion, literature or art or philosophy--was the gold of culture which had the same, full value everywhere. Asian nationalism accepted and welcomed Science, as much as did West-European nationalism. Also if it were possible to develop a Design of Morality out of Science, or one based principally in Science, it would be so penetrating that no walls of nationalism, racialism or dogmatism would keep it out.

From the point of view of the union of the East and West, no matter in what sense these strange words are employed, Science is obviously the most potent Educated Force. Scientific Knowledge and Ethics have a right of the way around the Earth as no other kind of ~~Know~~ Learning and Virtue have today.

At present, in the language of politics, the "East" means Russia-and-China and their partners, and the "West" is an euphemism for "America-and -Western Europe"; but both these titanic power systems want the same Science. Here, then, is the most promising key to bring about an intellectual, emotional, ethical and eventually administrative oneness of the world.



To sum up: while the East and the West have been chained and reacting to each other incessantly for a very long time, this process has been very wasteful; but through Modern Science it can be made efficient and constructive.

My growing belief that Science can unlock a new Moral Energy, develop a new Moral Power, of universal magnitude and acceptance, the foundation of the peaceful progress of the whole world, stirred in me the ambition to write on the subject. But I found that in these hectic and emotional times, most scientists, even in America, prefer to keep away from thoughts and statements of an ethical nature. My interpretation of the situation is that the working scientists are being prudent, and there is not yet a strong enough Science Movement to change the currents of history.

The professional work of the scientist--research, invention, education, is only a part--no doubt the most vital part--of a Science Movement, a Force of History. But it is not enough, as yet, to transform the ways of history, about which--let it be said clearly--most scientists know very little indeed. How is the scientist to be brought close to history? How is the man of history to be brought close to science? How is the average citizen to be brought close to both these, science and history? In other words, how is a new morality for the world to be evolved and accelerated?



## Page 15     Science In East-West:Preface

It was from Dr. Henry Allen Moe, Secretary General of the John Simon Memorial Guggenheim Foundation, that I received the fruitful advice that I should write about SCIENCE IN THE EAST AND WEST; that is about the Life of Science in the Occident and the Orient, taking a comprehensive view of times and places of importance in the evolution of civilization. Dr. Moe happens to be an American whose patriotism, like a Himalayan peak, rises so high that from its pinnacle a world view of learning and other values is possible. Through his intervention I received a Guggenheim Fellowship to in order to carry out the project he had suggested, and I had gratefully accepted.

Also I want express my profound gratitude to the Watumull Foundation, which gave me a fellowship, administered through Columbia University, for the preparation of a History of Science in India. This fellowship enabled me to revisit India in 1949, to participate in the proceedings of the Indian Science Congress meeting in Allahabad, and to visit the leading research institutes of the country, including the Tata Institute for Fundamental Research, of which Dr. H. J. Bhabha is the Director, and the Raman Institute and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, Dr. P. C. Mahanobis's Institute of Statics in Calcutta, the National Physical Laboratory in Delhi and so forth. Of course I met the leading Indian scientists, and received



## Page 16      Science East-West:Preface

the most generous hospitality and encouragement from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the late Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Minister of Education, Dr.B.C.Roy, Chief Minister of Western Beggal, the late Madame Sarojini Naidu, Governor of the United Provinces ( now Uttar Pradesh), from my close friend, Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, then head of the Government's Science Department. What this experience in India did was that it left no doubt whatsoever in my mind that India will strive as much as possible to remain Democratic ( Parliamentary Governance) and to develop Science, Technology and Industrialism. Thus America and India have a very great deal in common, and both have so much in common with England and most of the other nations of the Commonwealths System, which has resulted from the transformation of the old British Imperial Raj.

For reasons I have set forth in previous paragraphs, principally for these two reasons --that America and India have gained a new stature in the world of history--I feel quite optimistic about the solution of the problem of the East and West amicably. My feelings may not be shared by others. But let there be no doubt about the sincerity of my purpose, and of the humility, with which I present the pages that follow--about Mankind's Great Adventures of Science.

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Gobind Behari Lal : evoking some memories ... in the 90's of my life (I was born on Oct.9, 1889)... I think of my life "A Tale of My Three Cities)...  
 Delhi in India—San Francisco and New York City ...(five years in Los Angeles an extension between San Francisco and New York....)

\*\*\*\*\*

Any conscious purpose ? I grew up as a believer in and pursuer of four causes: Freedom, Science, Art and Love...

Most of all these causes... I tried to serve Freedom and Science.... The most important form of Freedom for me

was Indian National Freedom( the liberation of India from British and allied foreignrules)... Towards its success I made some unselfish contributions (involving personal hardships and joys)... About what I did to further this cause, I keep to myself... except certain things done quite openly, in a public way...

From the Indian Freedom Movement I acquired a profound interest in, and active and passive sympathy, for such Freedom Movements as Women's Liberation, Opposition to racial tyranny of any kind, workers cause, children's cause etc....

\*\*\*\*\*

My contribution to the Modern Science Movement was my professional science writing for the American newspapers —mostly for The Hearst Press (newspapers, magazines, syndicated

.....

I did use newspapers space, when avail bl to me, to write about (encouragingly) novelists, philosophers, poets, painters, sculptors even dancers ...

.....

I am most satisfied about having met with (alone) ... Mahatma Gandhi and Prof.Albert Einstein... With President Franklin D.Roosevelt, the third great man, I had some dealings related to the India Liberation Cause....

\*\*\*\*\*

\*An outline given to the interviewer by G.B. Lal. Dr. Lal intended writing a book, My Three Cities, and these are some of the ideas important for him in planning the book.



Two MEN :

I owe much of my development, particularly historical and ethical, to my friend and fellow-Hindu-Indian, five years my senior, Har Dayal ( 1885 to 1939).

I owe my "professional work and survival in the United States) to William Randolph Hearst (and his Family)

It was through my loyal and continued work in the Hearst Press System that I got myself "Americanized in the national sense"...

In this age of "Nationalism", my Nationalism is two-layered: Indian and American... I am a "double patriot", with no if or but. ...

Particularly since the Independence of India ( on Augst 15, 1947), my main Cause is INDIA-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP AND COLLABORATION... (My article in The S.F. Examiner on The Fourth of July 1973(?) is some thing which proclaims my faith publicly...

But-- now I grope towards another CAUSE...A WORLD UNITING SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM... The unification of all nations...without violence, through scientific technology and scientific rationalism...

\*\*\*\*\*

What Place( Space) and Time (historical) made dimensions  
me evolve from being a "British-and Indian--Imperialist  
Pre-Modern " man ..into a Modern Scientific Humanist?

The struggle was long.The obstacles were many and formidable, but they did not crush me down: I am up.

Partly of the energy required for such self transformation, perhaps a major part, was Modern University Education...



Page 3--LAL) ...

The struggle to be freed of ancient-and-medieval beliefs and practices began in St. Stephen's College (University of the Punjab) in Delhi (under British rule)...

It expanded in the classrooms and seminars of The University of Calif., Berkeley, continued fitfully at Columbia University, New York...

And in the daily newspaper work.... years after years.

\*\*\*\*\*

Making use of thinking by analogy (not identity)  
I have said (in writings and in lectures) that --since the end of World War II in 1945 or so... the whole of mankind has been passing through "NEW MIDDLE AGES".... and the Cause of the Enlightened is the Cause of a WORLD-WIDE RENAISSANCE... a process in which the world's universities would play the critically important role of history-transforming....

\*\*\* \*\*\*\*\*

#### SOME STEPS OF MY PAST

1) Learning at St. Stephen's, Delhi, how Modernism differs from Pre-Modernism (Ancient-Medieval Age)  
... The Three R's of Modernism--RENAISSANCE, REFORMATION, REVOLUTION... (Science Out of Renaissance)

2) Study of Social Reform Movements, of Modern Industrial Civilization... U.C. Berkeley... AMERICAN-FRENCH REVOLUTION...



Page 4--LAL( 3 Cities)

Carlton Parker's seminar.... Adolph C. Miller..David Barrows...  
 Henry Morse Stephen's... Jessica Peixoto, Alfred Kruger )  
 ...Study of Joseph Mazzini as a Social Reformer... Edmund  
 Spencer and Rudyard Kipling ...The Medieval Mind ....  
 Taggart...Pople etc...

( GADAR INTERVAL... EAST, ENGLAND... )

~~3)xxx~~...

.... Influenza... Advertising Cop ...Magazine etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

3)  
~~xxx~~ My Six Lectures on Psychology ...  
 Invitation by The Daily News

#### San Francisco Main Stream Journalism:

g) THE DAILY NEWS invites me ... I join its staff of feature writers...

(a) Behaviourism-- Evolution... Leading Persons Portraits  
 (Flowers for the Living )....THE BOHEMIANS OF SAN FRANCISCO

-----

A few weeks on The S.F. Morning Herald( Vanderbilt tabloids

\*\*\*\*\*

(5) SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER: Put to work by E.D. Coblentz,  
 managing editor.... Free to chose my own stories...  
 Sunday March of Events Section Features ( Nadya Lavrova )...

... Exclusive interview with Herbert Hoover ...

~~xxx~~ similar interviews with the day's literary  
 giants --- H.L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser,  
 Sherwood Anderson, Jim Tully... Poets--Edgar Lee Masters,  
 Robinson Jeffers, Edna St. Millay, Audrey Wurdeman( Joseph  
 Auslander)... Many became life long friends...



Page 5--LAL( 3 Cities... memories)

\*\*\*\*\*

Visit to Hollywood and Pasadena : CALTECH...

Robert A.Millikan tells me about his Cosmic Rays researches, measuring the charge of the electron etc...

Introduces me to Edwin P.Hubble and other great astronomers of The Mount Wilson Observatory... A.A. Michelson etc...

My articles on these new physics and astronomy launched by science writing career...

W.R.Hearst most pleased...All Sunday Hearst papers instructed to reprint them...

Science writer of this sort was unknown in the West Coast newspapers (which did print science news coming from the East...)

.....

THE CANCER (COFFEY-HUMBER ) STORY: In January 1930 I published, exclusively, an article(several) about a new biochemical theory of cancer developed by Dr.Walter Coffey, Chief-Surgeon of the Souther Pacific Medical System, with collaboration of Dr.John D.Humber( Tualne ) ...

Such was the reaction of this story all over the United States and abroad that the then existing reluctance of newspapers to publish any thing about cancer research was smashed once for all . I put CANCER RESEARCH IN TOP NEWS ever since.... Promoted to New York City...







San Francisco Chronicle April 2, 1982**Obituaries****Gobind Behari Lal**

Gobind Behari Lal, whose career in journalism as one of America's foremost science reporters spanned nearly 60 years, died of cancer yesterday at his home in San Francisco.

He was 92, and was actively writing for the Examiner until a few weeks ago.

Long before Americans became aware of how swiftly scientific advances were changing their lives, Lal was describing those basic research advances and interviewing the people who were making them.

He wrote about astronomy and cosmology, medicine and mathematics, high-energy physics and classical psychology — all with an erudition and literacy that his younger colleagues admired and his readers appreciated.

Lal was born in India, studied at the University of the Punjab, at Oxford, and as a graduate student in the social sciences at the University of California at Berkeley.

He shared a Pulitzer Prize in 1937 with three other reporters for his distinguished and perceptive coverage in depth of Harvard University's tercentenary. He received the award for outstanding journalism given by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Lal began his career in journalism with the Examiner in 1925. He was a feature writer, a book and art critic and a specialist in economics before turning to science. In 1934, while covering a meeting of the American Philosophical Society, Lal and a half-dozen other reporters founded the National Association of Science Writers. He later became president of the organization, which has more than 500 active members.

During his career with the Hearst Newspapers, in addition to his many years as science editor of the Examiner, Lal served at times as science editor of the International News Service and as editor of the

American Weekly in New York.

Early in his career, as a young science teacher, he was active in the campaign for Indian independence. Many decades later — having known Mahatma Gandhi personally and agreeing with Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence — he was a strong and articulate advocate of nuclear disarmament.

To hundreds of friends, the slight, courtly and soft-spoken Lal was known for his warm affection, his hospitality, his gentleness and modesty, and for the invariable greeting for all he knew: "Hello, Brother" — in the unmistakable accent of India that never left him despite his nearly 70 years in America.

At the time of his death he was editing the manuscript of an oral history of his life for the Bancroft Library at Berkeley.

Lal once said: "My job is to create a public taste for science. We must make science accessible to the people and for the people. Otherwise, it's dangerous."

Lal had no surviving relatives in San Francisco. Memorial services will be held at 11 p.m. Monday, April 5, at Haisted and Co., 1123 Sutter Street. Cremation will follow.







## APPENDIX H

San Francisco Examiner April 2, 1982

## Remembering Dr. Lal

**W**E AT THE Examiner and many other people in the Bay Area, and across the country, are mourning the death of Dr. Gobind Behari Lal. In his long years at this newspaper, we have known him as a man in whom brilliance and gentleness were combined.

Many San Franciscans who met this courtly gentleman, a survivor of the age of manners, did not know of the mark he made in earlier years. As a pioneer in the field of science writing, well-equipped with a Ph.D., he won the Pulitzer Prize and many other honors. His acquaintances included Albert Einstein and H.L. Mencken.

He had come from his native India, via Punjab University and Oxford, to leave an imprint upon his times with distinguished and vivid reporting and commentary on the rapidly expanding world of science. His career included teaching at UC-Berkeley. His intellect combined a powerful but gentle philosophy with his searching inquiries into science.

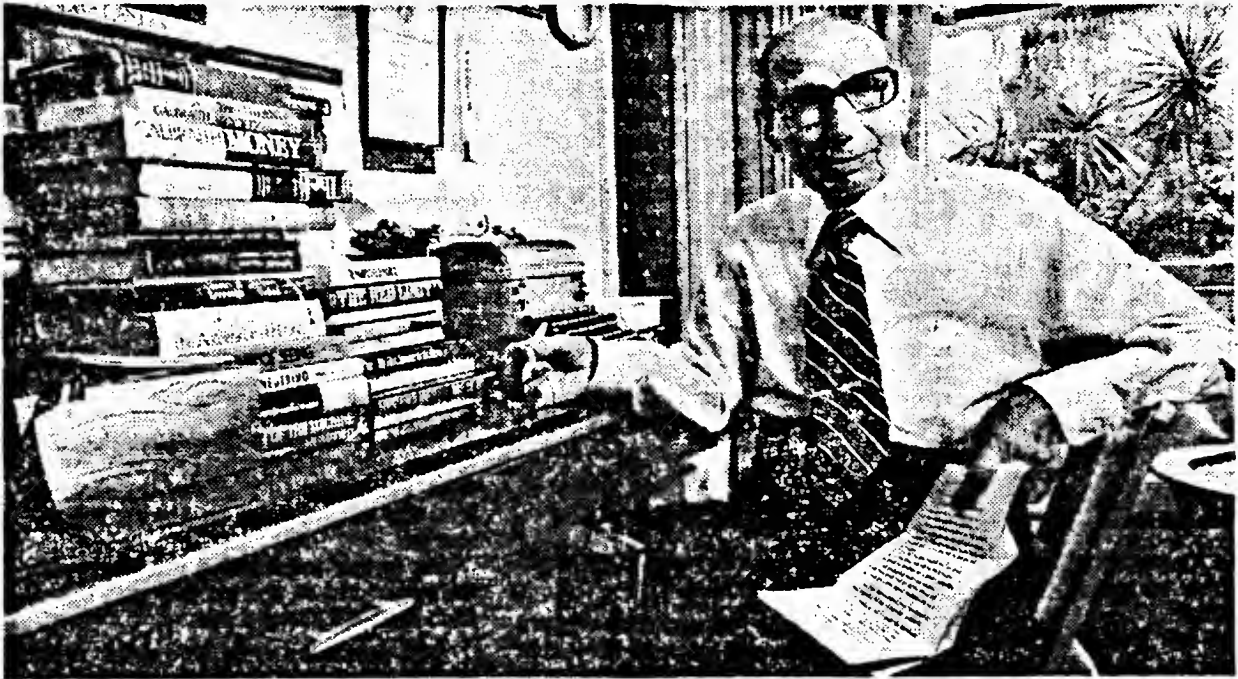
This went on into advanced age, until just before his death on Thursday at the age of 92. We are reminded of Justice Holmes' observation, "Life is not doing a sum, life is painting a picture." Dr. Lal painted a picture of goodness that made all of his honors an adornment to humility.



## APPENDIX I

San Francisco Examiner Friday, April 2, 1982

# Dr. Lal remembered for his knowledge and tenacity



Examiner/Paul Glines

**The Examiner's Dr. Gobind Behari Lal, a gifted and determined reporter, in his office**

He was, first, an extraordinarily gifted and determined reporter.

"I last saw him at the end of January in San Francisco," said Audrey Likely of New York City. "He attended a seminar, and he was hurling questions at the speakers and really pinning them down, asking them why they said this or that. When I told people he was over 90, they were all amazed by him."

The Examiner's Gobind Behari Lal, who died yesterday at age 92, won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting science news. He was considered everywhere to be the dean of science writers.

In the middle 1970s, Nobel physics laureate Charles H. Townes of the University of California recalled yesterday, he and Dr. Lal got into a heated discussion about cosmology at a San Francisco physics program.

The details of the debate are lost in the mists of time. What Townes recalled yesterday was the doggedness with which his adversary pursued his argument.

"He was a fine science writer and one of the originals," Townes said. "It's the passing of an age."

Likely, the former public relations director of the American Institute of Physics, knew Dr. Lal for 26 years.

"He was really very knowledgeable," she said. "He amazed me. He seemed to know as much as the people who were practicing physics."

As a Ph.D. in science, Dr. Lal had a wide-ranging interest in all fields and also in medicine and literature.

In the 1920s, newly arrived in San Francisco, he was acquainted with most of the literary stars of that era, including his good friend George Sterling, the poet laureate of San Francisco.

Indeed, Dr. Lal was with H.L. Mencken, the "Sage of Baltimore," the night in 1926 they learned that Sterling had committed suicide in his room in the Bohemian Club here. Sterling was a writer possessed by imagined demons.

Barbara J. Culliton, president of the National Association of Science Writers, said in Washington, D.C., that she last saw Dr. Lal here last December. He was one of the founders of the association and its president in 1940.

Culliton, news editor of Science magazine, said: "He was



always showing up somewhere. There was no more distinguished member of the NASW than Dr. Lal. He was active in the NASW for a long, long time. Our members had a particular fondness for him."

David Perlman, science editor of the San Francisco Chronicle and a former NASW president, said he and Dr. Lal shared many "delightful moments."

"He was a lovely, warm old man," Perlman said of his colleague.

Until just before his death, from cancer, Dr. Lal had turned up almost every day at his typewriter in The

Examiner, walking a little unsteadily with a cane, but still alert, still smiling.

He was courtly. Just barely over 5 feet tall, he would bend a little forward to better hear another person.

He customarily had a nice word for everyone.

Randolph A. Hearst, chairman of the Hearst Corp. and president of The Examiner, said Dr. Lal was a "truly remarkable gentleman and distinguished journalist."

William Randolph Hearst Jr., editor-in-chief of the Hearst newspapers, said that in the 50 years he had known Dr. Lal he had never heard him raise his voice, had never seen him smoke and had seldom seen him hold a glass of wine.

Pursuing a story, Hearst said, Dr. Lal "was tenacious and thorough... totally committed to getting the facts."

Dr. Lal often told colleagues on The Examiner that the secret to a long life was moderation. He never did anything in a blinding hurry, whether it was eating or walking down the corridor of the newsroom. And always he observed.

He shared a Pulitzer in 1937 with some of the biggest names in the science-writing profession: Howard W. Blakeslee of the Associated Press, William Laurance of the New York Times and David Dietz of Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

He also won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1956 for effective science reporting and numerous other journalistic prizes.

But what he was fondest of recalling, of all the distinguished events in his life, were his two meetings in the early 1930s with Albert Einstein.

He saw Einstein once in his home in Germany and once in the United States — these in the years when Hitler was making a shambles of the Jewish presence in Germany.

A native of Delhi, India, son of the governor of an Indian province, he often returned to his homeland and was many times honored for his achievements by the government there.

He had studied at Punjab University in India and at Oxford in England and had been a teacher of science and mathematics before he came to UC-Berkeley for graduate study in 1913.

Afterward, he founded an Indian-language newspaper in which he strongly advocated an end to British colonial rule in India.

He came to San Francisco in the mid-1920s.

His designation as "science writer" was perhaps the first time that title had ever been used in a newspaper.

He was on easy terms with such science giants as Max Planck, Enrico Fermi and William O. Lawrence.

Funeral services will be Monday at 11 a.m. at Halsted-N. Gray & Co., 1123 Sutter St. Cremation will follow.

Visitation will be from 6 to 9 tonight and from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. tomorrow.









Sometimes, in his later years, dressed in his dark suit and looking a bit owlish, Gopinath Behari Lal might appear to be dozing as the press conference droned on and a scientist struggled to explain what had been discovered. But then, at just the right moment, would come that clear voice with the distinctive accents of a far-away culture. "Tell me, doctor . . ." Lal would begin, and the question itself would illuminate the essential qualities of what everyone had been groping to understand. "I don't interview people. I exchange ideas with them," Lal once told an interviewer. "If I don't have anything to say, they have nothing to say to me." Good writing, Lal added, is "lucid, emotional, clear, startling, and rational. First of all, rational."

Lal himself was rational until he died, on April 1, at age 92, in his San Francisco apartment. He had continued to write occasional science articles for the *Examiner* until a few weeks before his death, and was in the process of editing an oral history for Berkeley's Bancroft Library (which will be completed in coming months). His career as a journalist had spanned nearly six decades, and for even longer he had been a scholar and a non-violent revolutionary idealist.

His friends called him "Gobi," and his greeting to them, on the phone or in person, was always "Hello, brother."

Lal was one of the first students from India to come to Berkeley, where he was a graduate student in the social sciences from 1912 to 1917. Indians had traditionally gone to England for advanced study, but Lal helped start a new trend, and tens of thousands of Indians have followed in his footsteps at Berkeley and other American universities.

His education at Berkeley, Lal said, helped him evolve from being a British-and-Indian-Imperialist-Pre-Modern-Man into a Modern Scientific Humanist. He attended all the lectures he could, but lacked the money to take laboratory courses, which required special fees. In some autobiographical notes, he mentions the study of social reform movements, Carlton Parker's seminar, recollections of Adolph C. Miller, David Barrows, Henry Morse Stephens, Jessica Peixoto, and Alfred Kroeber. In a political science class, he met the son of Sun Yat Sen, the great statesman and first president of China, and he belonged to the Cosmopolitan Club—"a kind of feeble affair," he wrote later, that used to meet at Siles Hall.

"Soon after I began graduate studies at the University of California, in 1913, the universi-

ty's president, Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, presented me to the venerable Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, whose munificence enlightened that seat of learning," Lal wrote a few years ago. "I realized that Mrs. Hearst and Dr. Wheeler were both Hellenists, engaged in igniting a twentieth century Renaissance at the Golden Gate. Their New Athens was to be democratic. Ancient Athens was not."

During a small dinner in 1913 at the Shattuck Hotel, Lal and some other Indian intellectuals and patriots started the Gadar Movement, dedicated to the cause of India's freedom from all foreign control. Starting a newspaper in the Indian language to mobilize support for independence was part of Lal's apprenticeship in public life. Without that sense of public affairs, he later told an interviewer, he would not have been likely to go into American journalism.

After traveling in Europe at the end of World War I, Lal went to work as a reporter for the San Francisco *Daily News*, and in 1925 moved to Hearst's *Examiner*. At first he wrote feature articles and interviewed famous literary people. But then came a visit with Robert A. Millikan, the famous scientist at Caltech, where an allotted 15-minute interview stretched into hours of discussion about Einstein's theories. Lal's ensuing articles on the new physics and astronomy launched his career as a science writer, the first in the western U.S., and brought him to the attention of William Randolph Hearst. Soon Lal's articles were appearing in all the Hearst papers, and he moved to New York, where he became science editor of Hearst's International News Service and for a time the editor of the *American Weekly*.

Lal was only five feet tall—a "diminutive giant" in the words of William R. Hearst, Jr., currently editor-in-chief of Hearst Newspapers, who last year wrote a preface to Lal's oral history. Lal never smoked, took only an occasional glass of wine, and never married. ("Why should I have forced some poor woman to live the way I do?" he once said jokingly.) "Lal looks, dresses, talks, and acts like a gentleman . . . and is," Hearst Jr. wrote. "However, none should be fooled by Lal's kindly demeanor. In the pursuit of a story, he is tenacious and thorough. When on assignment, he is totally committed to getting the facts."

The list of those he interviewed could stretch on for pages, with such names as Einstein, Fermi, Lawrence, Michelson, Planck, Millikan, Rutherford, Bush, Carver, Curie, Bohr, Fleming, Hahn, Huxley, and virtually all others who won the Nobel Prize or achieved other

scientific fame during his long career.

"Long before Americans became aware of how swiftly scientific advances were changing their lives, Lal was describing those basic research advances and interviewing the people who were making them," wrote David Perlman, science editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, at the time of Lal's death. "He wrote about astronomy and cosmology; medicine and mathematics, high-energy physics and classical psychology—all with erudition and literacy that his younger colleagues admired and his readers appreciated."

"I have always believed that my job is to create a public taste for science," Lal once wrote. "We must make science accessible, of the people for the people. Otherwise, it's dangerous."

Throughout his life, in fact, Lal was committed to two main goals—freedom and the progress of science. "The two should work together," he would say. "The good of the people cannot be achieved by contradicting the laws of nature." And from the Indian Freedom Movement, Lal said, he acquired a profound interest in and sympathy for such freedom movements as women's liberation, opposition to racial tyranny of any kind, the cause of workers and children (and, in later years, the cause of nuclear disarmament).

His most profound experiences, Lal wrote in his notes, were when he met alone with Mahatma Gandhi, with Albert Einstein, and with President Franklin D. Roosevelt—the "third great man," he said, with whom he "had some dealing related to the India Liberation Cause."

Another memorable meeting came in 1931 when Lal and two other science writers met with "two young scientists from California" at a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in New Orleans. The young scientists, Ernest O. Lawrence and J. Robert Oppenheimer, told how Lawrence had devised a cyclotron which produced high-speed protons, and that he needed a big magnet, a very powerful magnet, but that the University had no money because everybody was broke. "We published this article, and it had some effect upon his getting the 84-ton magnet," Lal told an interviewer. "Because the government of China had ordered from America a giant magnet for communications, and because in the interim that particular government had toppled, they gave the magnet to Dr. Lawrence." The rest is history.

Lal and a few other reporters founded the National Association of Science Writers in 1934, and in 1940 Lal served as the Association's president. In 1937, Lal and three other reporters won the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished and perceptive reporting of the Harvard University Tercentenary. There were many other honors, including the highest U.S. award in science writing and the Padma Bhushan Award from the President of India. ("I am a 'double patriot' with no if or but," Lal once wrote.) Since his death, a Lal Prize has been established by the Northern California Science Writers Association to honor excellence in science writing at Bay Area journalism schools, while still another lasting honor is under discussion on the Berkeley campus and in the Indian community.

Lal again on science writing: "I get possessed by an idea. Once I have that, I become excited, survey all around, and decide how to present it. Then it's all right, but it's not easy."

The greeting will always be there. "Hello, brother." To have known such a brother is indeed a rare and enriching privilege.

—Ray Colvig '53







WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST FOUNDATION  
THE HEARST FOUNDATION

690 Market Street, Suite 502  
San Francisco, California 94104  
(415) 781-8418

29 March 1982

Mrs. Willa Baum  
Regional Oral History Office  
The Bancroft Library  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720

Dear Mrs. Baum:

Last week, I returned from New York City where William Randolph Hearst Jr. handed me the accompanying material on Dr. Lal.

Mr. Hearst asked me to review it with Lal and if it met with his approval, to forward it to you.

As you may know, Dr. Lal has been seriously ill and was confined to the hospital for about two weeks.

I visited him at his apartment last Friday and, although he was very weak, he insisted on reading Mr. Hearst's proposed foreword to his Oral History.

The good doctor was delighted with the strong and positive salute. It was the best medicine he could receive. In short, he says "That's the way it was, and is."

Mr. Hearst knows the material may run a little longer than you requested. However, he is sure you can easily trim it to meet your space requirements.

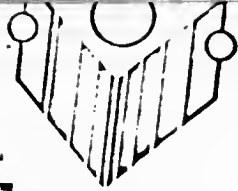
Sincerely,



CHARLES L. GOULD

Enclosures





APR 10 1982

APPENDIX L

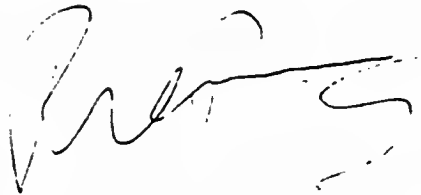
**Examiner**David Halvorsen  
Managing Editor

JUN 30 1982

April 12, 1982

Randy:

This is the final letter written by Dr. Lal to Bill. He composed it about three weeks ago, but it was never mailed. We have sent a copy on to Bill. I find his last words to be most interesting. It is clear from the letter that he knew his life was drawing to an end.

  
Dave H.



# HERRON & HERRON

A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION ATTORNEYS AT LAW

Mr. William Randolph Hearst, Jr.  
5th Avenue  
New York City

Allow me to salute Mrs. Hearst and yourself with a historic remembrance. It is no fairytale, although unique.

In India, where I grew up to be around 22, the name of William Randolph Hearst was unknown to college men. I knew what was British--Northcliff and the rest.

It was in July of 1912, when I took a ship, S.S. Nile, from Yokahama, Japan, whose destination was San Francisco that I bought a new kind of magazine--"The Cosmopolitan"--published by your father. . . This magazine contained an article about the theory of the Russo-French Nobel Laureat Elia Metchnikoff, with which I was already quite familiar.

The ship entered an awful typhoon, and like most passengers, many Japanese. I was seasick. The ship's doctor came to see me, and I began to talk about Metchnikoff's theory that consumption of Bulgarian lactic acid milk (yogurt) prolongs life. . . He became a friend, an M.D. from the University of California. He had heard about your father; what Californian hadn't. . . I became very much interested in the publisher of The Cosmopolitan.

When I entered the University of California (Sept. 1912 or so), the splendor of both your grandmother's and your father's was all around me on the campus. The Hearsts' Greek Theatre, the various buildings--and above all a whole architectural project to establish a new Athens. . .

An occasion arose, in 1913-1944, when the President of the University, Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, presented me to your grandmother, who was visiting the University on some of her philanthropic project. I was overcome with a feeling of veneration and admiration. . . Not only was this great lady contributing to the education. . . of women, of sound relations between parents and teachers. She had a global cultural viewpoint. . .

She asked me about my country and my purpose in being at U.C. She encouraged me to visit her again to pay my homage to her. . .



## HERRON & HERRON

If I am not in error, she had a great collection of Persian and perhaps also India rugs of great value. One of my professors and close friends, author Upham Pope, was having an illustrated catalogue of these carpets . . . I was given an opportunity . . . profitable for me.

Your grandmother's approval of me expressed to Dr. Wheeler, percolated to Prof. Pope, was like a spring shower to a young man from India--I never wrote any diary, any dates of events; and all that has remained (facts as fantasies) as like the perfume of a rose garden . . .

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My enthusiasm and admiration for Mr. W.R. Hearst, from a remoteness, became rooted in some of his signed editorials in The Examiner. Three were most unforgettable.

He declared himself in favor of "Home Rule" (independence) of Ireland, and urged the descendants of the Irish in U.S. to go and fight for the liberation of their Motherland (1913 or so).

He lashed at the directors of The Century Club of New York for their rejection of the application for membership of the Jewish scientist, Jacque Loeb, of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. He denounced anti-Semitism of those days.

What was particularly heart-warming for me was his outright support for the independence of India from British rule (1922). Who else among the press Magnates of the United States did anything like this? My gratitude for him was deep and abiding.

Long before your father sanctioned to Mr. Coblenz that I be given an opportunity to work--such a rare thing in those days, when the Asian Indian movement was very strong on the West Coast--I counted myself as a "foreigner" who understood Hearst's high purpose.

What purposes?

America unifying Patriotism.

The patronage of the Renaissance kind for those who showed talent . . .



## HERRON & HERRON

The builder of San Simeon was an artist himself, and like the rulers of Florence in Italy or of early 19th century German Principality (e.g., the Duke who was the patron of Goethe) a creative patron of his beloved New Land . . .

This quality of The Hearst House may be grasped when viewed by an eye of detachment and by the eye of the appraiser of high values [knowledge, education, beauty], of new Paganism or New Renaissance, . . .

Your father was a poet, a magnificent, fearless essayist and historian (if not a professional history writer).

It would be an impertinence for me to recall so many kindnesses I have received from yourself, from Mr. Randolph A. Hearst and other members of the family, and from a member of your ministers . . .

I have read with sedulous interest, probably, all the books so far published written by some of your employees and by outsiders, "biography writers". They may have given dates and controversies, but missed an overall truth . . . The Hearst purpose: Patriotism and Renaissance quality. So I salute you with loyalty and love, woven of so many memories. The time has long passed for me to attempt any pragmatic flattery . . .

I have lived 92 years, mostly in work for YOU [your great house, and the institution and organization].

The end of the journey is on the horizon of time for me.

May YOU go on pyramidizing successes in the creativity of this great land!

Affectionately,

Gobind Behari Lal







APPENDIX M<sub>1</sub>

San Francisco Examiner  
17 March 1978

SF Examiner

# Gobind Behari Lal / something lost 17 March 1978



San Francisco's climate, a free gift of nature, has not changed. But with its new box-like buildings, colored white or blue like jeans, The City could be mistaken for Brooklyn or the Bronx.

The historical and psychological change is largely attributable to the two world wars and other wars, and to the related mechanization and industrialization. Has something valuable been lost? I think it has.

What has been lost I propose to call San Francisco liberty. Compared with the peoples of the Old World and even of the eastern and central parts of the United States, San Franciscans were free to develop their intellects, emotions and other endowments, without fear of tyrannical rules and institutions.

The culture of the city and of the realm around was Athenian and of the Renaissance — modern, aesthetic and undominated by factories. The people had a natural bohemianism, a mood of playfulness and free sociability. Their

mood was humane, averse to hate and violence.

The region's San Francisco-dominated Renaissance occurred during the decade of self-creation after the quake-and-fire of 1906. It reached its festive climax in the Panama-Pacific Exposition, in 1916.

The principal components of this New Spirit were mercantile and agricultural enterprise, the enlightenment emanating from the University of California and Stanford University, and the newspapers of San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley.

Soon after I began graduate studies at the University of California in 1913, the university's president, Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, presented me to the venerable Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst, whose munificence enriched that seat of learning. I realized that Mrs. Hearst and Dr. Wheeler were both Hellenists, engaged in igniting a twentieth-century Renaissance at the Golden Gate. Their New Athens was to be democratic. Ancient Athens was not.

The Greek Theatre, a gift of William Randolph Hearst, civilized with dramatic arts the raw exuberance of the student population.

What could have become violence was tamed with beauty. Hates and prejudices were turned into cooperation and creativity, into a spirit of beneficence.

Fremont Older, the San Francisco editor, fought against political corruption and cruelty and injus-

tice, especially towards helpless victims.

I won the friendship, also, of Prof. Thorstein Veblen, Stanford University's most original social scientist, a fighter for a better world civilization.

My friend George Sterling, the poet-laureate of San Francisco, lived at the Bohemian Club, one of whose founders was Henry George, prophet of the "single tax" movement. Sterling was the leader of the Bohemians of the San Francisco Bay realm. Among his admirers and disciples was Edward Raine Bennett, poet and dramatist.

Raine, as we fondly called him, established the Western Arts Club in a romantic house at 1001 Vallejo St. atop Russian Hill. This house eventually became the abode of high-class courtesans managed by Sally Stanford, now a political power in Sausalito.

Novelist Idwal Jones, in his bachelor days, made his studio over the original Blum's Candles at California and Polk streets, a center of sociability and cultural conversation for writers and artists.

It was here that Hugh Walpole, British novelist visiting San Francisco, found the creativity of San Francisco he had been seeking.

San Francisco liberty — playful, irreverent, but not violent — emancipated people from institutionalized hatreds and brutalities. It seems to have evaporated, as the art of conversation has been replaced by TV shows.







San Francisco Examiner Friday, June 9, 1978

# Gobind Behari Lal / India's freedom

June 9  
1978

Morarji Desai, 82-year-old Prime Minister of India, which is numerically the largest American-style democratic republic in the world, will be in San Francisco today.

He is making a state visit at the invitation of President Carter. And in the San Francisco Bay Area — at the Berkeley campus of the University of California, and Stanford University on the Peninsula, he will glimpse one of the important roots of Indian independence.

I last interviewed him ten years ago in New Delhi. Then he was Deputy Prime Minister. Madame Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of the one time British colony.

One question inspired a reply that summed up his passion for patriotism for a united India.

"Is it true," I asked, "as I hear and read, that India is Balkanizing, reaking up into a congeries of arreling states?"

He replied:

"No, We will never let India break up. Today India is a republic for the first time in her political history of some 6,000 years. We will keep it."

Mr. Morarji had vision and purpose. Now India is stronger, more stable — and on firmer friendly relations with the United States, Britain and the Commonwealth nations, Russia and her collaborators and almost all other nations — than she was 29 years ago, when Jawaharlal Nehru, first Indian Prime Minister, visited America, invited by President Truman.

Nehru saw some vivid evidence of a vigorous, effective form of the movement of Indian independence which had grown up in the Bay Area.

This segment of modern history has remained largely unknown.

Let the river of history be traced backward, to the period 1912 to 1922.

The University of California at Berkeley and the City of San Francisco became the cultural and political field in which a cutting of the movement for the independence of India was planted, in which it grew rapidly.

To the university came a few Indian students and scholars for scientific and other modern studies. Some of them were converted to the faith of the American Revolution, and became determined to apply it to India.

It is enough to give one Indian name, Dr. Har Dayal. He had come

from Oxford University to Stanford. He became the leader. He had the brain and the emotive fire to gather around him hundreds of Indian immigrants.

But even the Indian mind, nourished and inspired by the university, and the Indian workers' young brawn, taken together, would have accomplished little. What brought historic results was the arousing of sympathy and support from influential Americans

At the University of California: Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler, president, professors Arthur Pope (philosophy); Arthur Ryder (Sanskrit literature); Solomon Blum, Jessica Peixotto (social science); Thomas Reed (political science).

Press leaders: William Randolph Hearst, Fremont Older, John D. Barry and others.

Political leaders: Hiram Johnson, James D. Phelan, both United States Senators from California.

As early as January 22, 1922, William Randolph Hearst wrote:

"Independence for India: On what basis of justice or general good or public benefit or individual advantage or liberty or democracy or self determination, or anything that is recognized as right, is India kept in bondage by England? ... India is surely a nation to which the principle of self-determination might be applied."

The question was answered a generation later when the seeds of Indian independence, nurtured in San Francisco, in Berkeley, and at Stanford, bloomed







## Bohemia

# Individual influence on culture

By Gobind Behari Lal

San Francisco takes pride in its current lifestyle that allows those who are different to flourish individually. But such tolerance is nothing new in the city of hills and sunshine and fog.

In yesteryear this culture would be called "Bohemia." But what kind of man or woman is a "Bohemian."

Webster does provide this explanation:

"A Bohemian is a follower of art, literature or other intellectual pursuit, who adopts a mode of life, in protest against, or indifference to, the common conventions of his society, especially in social relations."

Bohemia came out of a coma and began to shine in San Francisco when the First World War ended.

The Bohemian Club had made Bohemia respectable. Its resident member, George Sterling, the city's poet-laureate and "King of Bohemia," gave authentic literary radiance to the cause.

One of Sterling's younger admirers and followers, also a Bohemian Club member, was Raine Bennett, in his early 20s, a poet, playwright, piano player and singer.

Raine was impelled to make Bohemia his career. He started publishing a magazine which he named *Bohemia*, a sister to *Smart Set*, published in New York by H.L. Mencken and George Nathan.

Then Raine launched *Bohemia* as a public movement. He started the Western Arts Club.

The Club found an abandoned little theater, where it sponsored reading of poetry and plays written by the members, discourses on the history, and the nature of *Bohemia*.

Raine had to have an elegant mansion as the home of Western Arts.

He had no cash.

But Raine Bennett had imagination, enthusiasm, personal charisma.

He acquired a legendary house, a romantic creation of architecture, for his home. This mansion was, and is, at 1001 Vallejo St. on Russian Hill. Its owner was Paul Verdier, master of the City of Paris, the stylish store on Union Square.

Western Arts thrived here for a couple of years or so, while the shortage of money to pay the bills was chronic.

George Sterling, George Douglas and other well-known writers were active, participants but more as invited guests than as dues-paying members.

Unlike the modern Bohemian Club on Taylor Street, Raine's Western Arts opened full membership and participation to women.

I think that it was the Greek dance of a beautiful young woman performed at 1001 Vallejo St. hall that stimulated Sterling to write one of his splendid poems, "To a Girl Dancer."

Raine Bennett's poem, expressing his mood, was about grapes — the source of wine. He sang: "Beneath my ribs an arbor vine/and shaded there, a glowing shape/doeth hang my heart, which is a grape..."

Was "wine, women and song" the motto? More aptly it was "men and women... with song."

What happened to wine? Those were the days of the prohibition of alcohol. Imbibing of alcohol couldn't be open. Who wanted raids by gendarmes?

Few San Francisco Bohemias, including Western Arts, seemed to be concerned with political and economic doctrines and controversies.

At Western Arts there was a conspicuous absence of nationalistic hatreds, engendered by the war, and of racialism. Talented persons of all national sympathies and antecedents, of all racial heritages fraternized.

Inevitably came the day when the pile of unpaid bills reached altitude. The mansion had to be given up. Many years later, this house came into the competent hands of Madame Sally Stanford. She established there a highly lucrative business of providing courtesans to male animals of the republic.

Giving up 1001 Vallejo St. didn't quash Raine Bennett's apostolic fervor for Bohemia. He took Western Arts to another elegant mansion, I believe at 2080 Washington St.

This happens to be Spreckel's mansion which is mentioned, as a prospective residence of the consul-general of the People's Republic of China, Asia's foremost Marxian power. Revolution?

Western Arts didn't survive long. Raine Bennett was convinced that literary and other sorts of artistic creativity had ceased to have a future in San Francisco. He went to Hollywood and then to New York, where he still writes and Bohemianizes.

The role Bohemian temperament and behavior and achievement play in the evolution of the institutions of civilization is worth study.

We are living in an age of regimentation, supported by machine technology, developing a technological State, no doubt efficient.

But this could squeeze originality and joy out of human life. Artists among even scientific thinkers, like Einstein, have often been Bohemians in their life style.

Bohemia may be a vital part of democracy.

*Gobind Behari Lal, a contemporary of the Bohemians of yester-year in San Francisco, is a Pulitzer prize winning Hearst writer.*



## Other voices / The Examiner's open forum for your views on all issues

# England's real contribution to man

By Gobind Behari Lal

What is England's most unsullied and substantial contribution to civilization?

It is the achievement of English science, particularly during the period between the Reigns of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) and Victoria (1837-1901). These were prolonged to 1939.

But with the conclusion of World War II, in August of 1945, the primacy of American science and technology was established when the United States dropped the atom bomb on Japan, its wartime enemy.

In England's classic age of science two scientists stand out conspicuously: Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and Charles Robert Darwin (1809-1882).

Isaac Newton, in his book, *Principia — The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (Physics) — claimed boldly to have worked out the frame of the system of the world.

For most of us his fame is associated with his idea of gravity or gravitation, the force of attraction between all objects. But he contributed much more to man's mastery of natural forces.

In March, 1930, I was sent by *The Examiner* to talk with astronomer C. W. Tombaugh, at the Lowell



Elizabeth I

Observatory, Flagstaff, Arizona. He had just then discovered the planet Pluto, the 9th major planet of the Solar System. After the discoveries of the planets Uranus and Neptune until 1846, the American's discovery was a most notable event.

The landing of American astronauts on the Moon about 10 years ago was a marvel of the new American-Russian Space Age.

Behind all these achievements was Newton's law of gravitation, for calculating exactly the motions and positions of such objects, or the planets and their stars.

Now, think of your own body as an object upon which the force of gravity acts all the time. You may be amused to know that if you are in San Francisco and your wife is in New York, your bodies are attracting by their gravity attraction.

More serious is what the Earth's gravity pull is doing to your heart and arteries, which push upwards the load of your blood particularly in your upright position. This gravity effect is one reason that man is mortal.

It was an English physician-scientist of Newton's days, Dr. William Harvey (1578-1657), who discovered how blood keeps circulating in the human or any animal body.

Newton was the founder of the science of objects in motions, the Science of Mechanics. He devised rules for calculating where a thing in motion would be at a particular time: the time-table of the universe, in which nothing is at rest, but is ever moving, changing.

Another thing he did was making discoveries about light, surely one of the most important energies of the universe.

★ ★ ★

Michael Faraday (1791-1867) and his follower James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) made fundamental discoveries about the force of electromagnetism. Electrically charged objects and magnetically charged objects act upon one another.

It had been known for a long time that if two



things are electrically charged they either attract or repel each other. If their charges are similar (positive or negative), they repel; if the charges are unlike, they attract.

Magnetic poles, "north" and "south" types, act the same way. What Faraday and Maxwell found and proved was that the two forces of electricity and magnetism were intimately related; there was just one electromagnetic force.

Now it was possible to generate electric currents by manipulation of magnets, and to obtain magnetic forces from electricity. The age of electrical industrialism had been started.

Beams or waves of electromagnetic energy could be sent out in space. They would all travel with the speed of light. Indeed light and radio waves were different forms of electromagnetic force or energy.

Already in 1750 or so, the period of the American Revolution, English scientists and inventors had begun the Industrial Revolution — the use of steam heat to run factories and locomotives.

Many English scientists played important roles in the developing of stationary and moving machines in which working-power, "energy," was provided by heat and electricity and magnetism, instead of by human muscles.

Basic scientific knowledge helped industrial production, and industrialism helped basic scientific advances.

★ ★ ★

Charles Darwin published his book, *"The Origin of Species,"* in 1859. So he launched the "theory of evolution" of living things — plants, animals, human beings.

His idea was that the different "races" or "kinds" of living forms were not unchanging, ever the same, as had been believed. A new kind could arise out of an old form.

Charles Darwin published his book, *"The Origin of Species,"* in 1859. So he launched the "theory of evolution" of living things — plants, animals, human beings.

His idea was that the different "races" or "kinds" of living forms were not unchanging, ever the same, as had been believed. A new kind could arise out of an old form.

Thus, apes and monkeys and human beings had a common ancestor millions of years ago. Changes in the heredity system of the common ancestor gave rise to new breeds. Those new types that were adapted to the environment went on reproducing themselves: "survived." The non-adaptors were discontinued. Thus progress occurred. Man was part of this process.

Bitter was the opposition to Darwin's theory. But this heretical scientist was not thrown into jail or hanged. The English respect for science was exceptional.

★ ★ ★

A most admirable act of scientific enlightenment and wisdom was the English scientists' treatment of Albert Einstein — a German Jewish enemy citizen at the close of World War I.

During the war, Einstein had published his new theory of gravity, as an improvement on Newton's old theory. A test of the Einstein theory was made by Sir Arthur Eddington and Sir Frank Dyson, British astronomers, on May 29, 1919. An English expedition was sent out to photograph the total eclipse of the sun from the equator.

The result showed that Einstein's prediction was fulfilled exactly. What was it? That the light of a star will be pulled by the gravity of the Sun by a certain amount.

That was shown by the photographs. Thus the English were willing to accept a revision of their great Newton's law of gravity.



Gobind Behari  
Lal is a Hearst  
News Service  
Pulitzer prize  
winning science  
writer.



# San Francisco's bohemia of yester-year— —and future

By Gobind Behari Lal

**F**OR the bohemian artists of San Francisco it was a night of revelry. They were poets, novelists, journalists. The event of love and laughter was held in the most elegant hotel ball room in town.

The ball was one of the events of the Era of Bohemianism of San Francisco when creative art, creative thought, and creative writing flourished with excellence as it never had before and probably never has since.

For the night of revelry there prevailed a spirit of defiance — and a remedy — of repressions which included the prohibition of the drinking of alcohol imposed at the end of World War I.

There was the drinking of wine, the feasting with fine foods, dancing, love making. All were efforts to release the imprisoned spirits of a rare group of human beings, seldom gathered together.

The outstanding bohemian of this occasion was George Sterling, the city's poet-laureate. He was costumed as Dante. He was my friend.

H. L. Mencken, Ring Lardner and other nationally renowned writers converged in San Francisco at the time of the Democratic Convention of 1920. They were hosted by Sterling in the brotherhood of literature and public philosophy.

One night Sterling brought Mencken to dinner in Bign's Italian restaurant at Columbus and Broadway. Among those invited to meet Mencken were George Douglas and Idwal Jones, who reviewed books for newspapers, and this writer.

With his unusual generosity and loyalty to friends, George Sterling enabled me to meet Robinson Jeffers, living in Carmel, Gertrude Atherton of Palo Alto, and many other distinguished California writers. I met Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, Jim Tully and others.

In the Bohemian Club, where he lived, he had affluent friends. But Sterling was thoroughly at home in the "studios" — low rent rooms — of struggling, non-affluent bohemian writers and artists.

The characteristic of the bohemians of the era was a spirit of freedom, coupled with exceptional talent.

I asked Sterling to tell me what bohemianism was all about. He said, in effect, this:

- A bohemian is dedicated to and pursues one of the high arts — poetry, painting or any other.
- He is indifferent to money or property. He is typically non-affluent.
- His outlook is radical, rather than conventional.

As to the term bohemia or bohemianism, it originated in a novel by a French writer, Henri Murger. The title was "Scenes from Bohemian Life." In 1851, Murger wrote:

"Today as in the past, any man who enters the arts,

without any means of support other than art itself, will be forced to go by the paths of Bohemia."

Bohemians were gypsies, as they were known in Paris in those days. Poor artists were like gypsies.

In San Francisco, and the West Coast generally, the appreciation of beauty, nature and the product of art, was a cardinal faith of bohemians.

Sterling was one of the fathers of the bohemia of Carmel-by-the-Sea, where the poet Jeffers was destined to become nationally and supranationally famous.

In one of his great poems, "The Continent's End," Jeffers sang of the Pacific Ocean, as seen from the Carmel Bay:

"Mother, though my song's measure is like your surfbeat's ancient rythm/ I never learned it from you./ Before there was any water there were tides of fire, both our tones flow from the older fountain . . ."

What was the practical use of poetry? Impatiently Sterling wrote:

"Poetry is the magic of words. It transports us a moment from the practical to the land of dreams. It is a bond between man and wonder. But the Age of Steel begins to sing in a voice of steel. Its wand is a scalpel, and instead of the honeymoon, we are proffered the vivisection of the bride. We have become adults who are afraid of play. Beauty had its say. The stage is now to be given to ugliness . . ."

The death of Sterling by suicide, in late 1926, closed one round of bohemian activity in San Francisco.

**B**UT one aspect of bohemia, its radical outlook, remains to be recalled. It was well represented by the International Radical Club that flourished in San Francisco for about five years, until the United States entered the First World War, in April, 1917. It had no premises.





George Sterling, Idwal Jones, H.L. Mencken, Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Kenneth Rexroth, Ring Lardner, Robinson Jeffers, Theodore Dreiser

The membership fee was a dime a month, used by the secretary for postage to let the registered members know of the coming dinner meeting, held once a month.

Usually some Italian restaurant served a full course dinner with wine for less than two dollars per guest.

After dinner an invited guest speaker talked about some social subject. His speech was discussed freely by those present. Among those who attended were university students, newspaper persons, poets, writers, artists of radical beliefs, mild or extreme.

Some of the invited guests were professors of history and sociology from the universities of California and Oregon; Clarence Darrow, Chicago lawyer; Margaret Sanger, pioneer of the birth control movement.

Sadakichi Hartman, whose father was a German and mother Japanese, wrote poetry and plays. His talk was about the "Sex Revolution," the age of the "flappers."

The cult of "free love" was launched by the radicals known as the anarchists. Not many Americans seem to remember now that Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) had launched anarchism in Europe about the same time that bohemianism had started in the Latin Quarter of Paris.

This Russian aristocrat had a blue-print for a free non-capitalist society organized from the bottom upwards by spontaneous or voluntary cooperation. He took the idea from the French revolutionist Pierre Joseph Proudhon, the first thinker to call himself an "anarchist."

In its non-violent form anarchism became the philosophy of Leo Tolstoy, Russian novelist. It had a great influence in San Francisco in the early 20th Century.

In 1966, I spent a day in Berlin, in the company of

Kenneth Rexroth, who had been a leading San Francisco poet, bohemian and radical teacher.

**M**R. Rexroth has been candid about his radicalism, with anarchistic leanings. He is not satisfied with poetry, music or any other art which ignores the problems of poverty and tyranny anywhere.

Pursuit of sexual pleasures, abetted by LSD and all sorts of brain affecting drugs, without any social purpose was not to his liking.

The hope and creed of today's bohemia are presented by Prof. Richard Miller in his book, "Bohemia, The Protoculture, Then and Now," published by Nelson Hall of Chicago.

It is shown by Dr. Miller that San Francisco is one of the originators of bohemia, like Paris. The cities created a world-wide cloud of bohemian spirit. This spirit is essentially liberty.

While the older — Paris-born — bohemia emphasized the potency of art, including literature, and revolt against political and economic tyranny, the new San Francisco generated bohemia seeks to combine art and science for the conservation of human life: "Life for Life's Sake."

What is going to happen no one can predict with assurance, but the promise of a new civilization is inherent in such behavior as bohemia, properly understood, Dr. Miller seems to tell us.

My own belief is that without the use of technology, the dreams of bohemia cannot be realized. Science frees us from superstition, and increases man's control of environment. But art can create a paradise on earth, and without the use of machines, only a few people can enjoy art and science.

Technology must be made a part of new bohemia.







San Francisco Examiner

May 2, 1980

# Gobind Behari Lal / *Political psychiatry May 2, 1980*



You wake up, go to bed dazed by ever-new displays of big madness manufactured by politicians in power.

Can the head shrinkers, the psychiatrists, do any thing about it?

Some good answer may come out of their coming meetings to be held in San Francisco next week.

For example, at a session of the American Psychoanalytic Association, a sect of psychiatry, Dr. David S. Werman, of Chapel Hill, N.C., will discuss Freud's belief about "civilization and its discontents."

While all forms of psychiatry can be used to relieve or reduce mental suffering of individual patients, they can also be applied as weapons of war.

For Freud, the papa of psychoanalysis, war was sheer destruction, rooted in what he called the instinct of death. Let's get acquainted with him again.

Like Darwin, Marx and Einstein, Freud has so changed the ways of our thinking that he cannot be ignored.

Sigmund Freud was born in a Jewish family of Austria, May 6, 1856. As a refugee from the Nazis he went to London in 1938. He died in September 1939, just as England declared war on Germany.

As the poet, W. H. Auden, has said about Freud, he is no more a person, a "physician," but a "whole climate of opinion." What did he do?

At the beginning of the 20th century, the most important people believed that they were chiefly governed by reason, although subject to deplorable spells of "irrationality," "madness."

Freud reversed the picture. He claimed to have found that the "voice of reason," although it was persistent, had but a very small influence upon human conduct.

He made conventional virtue and morality be regarded with suspicion — apparent unselfishness might be self-punishment, kindness may conceal a patronizing attitude of superiority, etc.

He also held that some of man's proudest "spiritual" achievements were rooted in very primitive instincts, inheritable drives towards aggression, lust, etc.

The masks of civilization concealed from a person his or her uncivilized motives.

The mental sufferings called neurosis, mild madness, were treated by Freud and his followers by listening to the patient's descriptions of the dreams of the previous night.

Something called emotional transference plays a most important role in Freud's scheme of understanding human behavior.

Roughly, it means that the experiences of childhood, of infancy, leave impressions, which are forgotten, but never snuffed out. In later years, the adult is driven to do something by the early life emotional effects.

During World War II, an American soldier became mentally disorganized suddenly. He had spells of weeping and other disabling symptoms. He was treated by a military psychiatrist, who listened to the soldier's dream.

The dream was that the soldier was being chased by a furious bull. It was most frightening. The soldier woke up perspiring ...

Meaning?

The soldier hated his new commander, who was like his father, a harsh, unsympathetic man, punishing the child frequently ... Once the patient understood this, his symptoms vanished.

Who is going to psychoanalyze the political leaders of nations, before and during their periods of authority?

That is the \$64 question today.







## Gobind Behari Lal / *The Star of Freedom*



The Fourth of July, 1776, started the American Revolution. It exploded the Star of Freedom for the whole world. Close on the heels of the American Revolution came the French Revolution.

One of the shapers of these 18th Century revolutionary principles, Thomas Jefferson predicted in 1826:

"The Declaration of Independence . . . will be the signal of arousing men . . . to burst the chains . . . and to assume the blessings and security of self-government."

Even he could not have foreseen that his prediction was going to be fulfilled in far away India. Or he might have, with his rare vision.

After monarch after monarch lost his throne in Europe the process reached out to Asia.

Soon after the British Empire was expelled from America, Ram Mohan Roy, an early Indian intellectual and patriot committed to modernism, prepared to visit the

United States. He died on the way in England in 1832.

At last in 1947, India got rid of the British Empire. The New Indian Nation didn't go back to the 5,000-year-old king-and-priest system of governance. India followed American secularism, American republicanism.

Here are some clauses from the written Indian Constitution adopted on 26 November, 1949:

"We, The People of India . . . constitute India into a Sovereign, Democratic Republic . . . to secure to all its citizens . . . Justice — social, economic, political; Liberty — of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality — of status and opportunity; Fraternity — assuring the dignity of the individual and the Unity of the Nation . . ."

Dr. Hans Kohn, professor of history of the University of New York City, wrote:

"Independence of India marked the most momentous step in history of decolonization. British India had become the most conspicuous symbol of European imperial power . . . India's freedom became the signal for the rapid success of other nationalistic struggles for independence in Asia and Africa."

American independence and republicanism are the elder brother of Indian independence and republicanism. They both came to birth by terminating the same British Imperialism, although at different times.

(Dick Nolan is on vacation)

A legacy of the common British heritage is English language — now America's own language and India's adopted second national language.

With such a background it would seem natural for America and India to be close collaborators in progress implied in their virtually identical revolutionary principles.

But there have been too much disharmony, too much mutual suspicion, even fear between America and India.

I believe this is bad for both nations. I believe this matter deserves probing and clearing up.

Begin with the end of the Second World War, which was marked by the skyrocketing of America to the top position among the powers of the world, and by the new birth of Indian national liberation.

Did Americans adopt or continue the old British attitude towards Indians?

Did Indians adopt or continue towards Americans the attitude they had towards their British rulers?

Maybe that was happening, partly openly, partly veiled.

The trouble is there is not enough communication between America and India.

An amplification and renewal of the Principles of Freedom of July Fourth, 1776, could be the answer to the troubles of the world.







# Gobind Behari Lal / 'At the end of our streets are stars'



San Francisco hills, particularly Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill, proudly wore the coronets of poetry and other arts during the phoenix years of the city's heroic resurrection from the fallen stones and ashes of the 1906 earthquake and fire.

George Sterling, San Francisco's poet-laureate, took me to his favorite abode of poetry on Telegraph Hill on a bright Sunday of 1919. A preparation for this trip was a dinner the previous night.

Sterling was the host at Bigin's restaurant at a foot of Telegraph Hill in the Italian town.

His two other guests were a comely

woman, to whom he gave a bunch of fresh colorful flowers; and Dr. Albert Abrams, who told me about his "electronic medicine."

Sterling's tribute to a poor fish, abalone, was chanted as we ate abalone, downed with gulps of wine:

"Oh! Some folks boast of quail on toast,  
Because they think it's tony;  
But I'm content to owe my rent  
And live on abalone!"

Drinking of wine, or of any of its rummy sisters, was a federal crime under the law of prohibition. The commission of such a crime was striking a blow for freedom for the poets and the artists who gathered at restaurants like Bigin's.

At Bigin's there was a willing collaborator of the rebellious poets and artists, a waiter known fondly as "Julius."

In later days, after Bigin's was closed in the early 1920's, Julius had his own artistic adventure, setting up a restaurant on Telegraph Hill — Julius Castle.

Sterling and I went to Telegraph Hill, where the poet introduced me to his most close friends — Henry ("Harry") Anderson Lafler and his wife "Mary" Lafler.

"Harry" Lafler was some sort of a businessman, essentially he was a writer, an excellent poet. "Mary," an exceptionally beautiful woman in a city of so many beautiful women, was particularly interested in dancing — with Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Dennis.

From Laflers' house it was possible to have a panoramic view of Berkeley, Oakland, Piedmont Hills. There lived Sterling's friends, Xavier Martinez, painter and poet, and Jack London's daughter . . .

While trying to comprehend the attraction of the literary and other artistries for the hills of the San Francisco Bay realm, I was startled by the sight of a few goats wandering freely on a spur of Telegraph Hill.

The goats made me think of Greece, and Near East.

"Isles of Greece! . . . Isles of Greece — where burning Sappho lived and sung" — were situated on 38 degrees of latitude which was the latitude of San Francisco and the nearby cities . . .

A poetry movement had risen in San Francisco, energized by a literary tradition by a reaction from the earthquake disaster by British cultural propaganda of the First

World War (1914 and after) era. Such eminent English writers as Hugh Walpole, W.L. George, John Cowper Powys came to lecture at women's clubs and at chamber of commerce kind of public institutions.

Sterling helped in publishing poetry, written by Californians, in *The Overland Monthly* magazine. Ethel Turner published *The Wanderer*, a poetry magazine . . .

Why not taste some of the poetic products of these days, of these Telegraph Hill and Russian Hill dwellers. They preferred the isolation and the beautiful vistas of the hills to the pedestrian activity of the shops and offices.

A few phrases plucked from whole poems are:

George Sterling — To a Dancing Girl:  
"O flesh! made music in its ecstasy/ Sing to us ere an end of song shall be/ O fair things, young and fleet/ Be glad! Be glad! For happiness is holy! . . ."

Harry Lafler — White Feet of Atthis:  
"Then Atthis to her poet-lover said/ Why dost thou never murmur of my feet/ A little song and sweet/ For surely they are worth

a fragile rhyme/ To cast in the teeth of Time . . ."

Before of after George Sterling's death in November, 1926, Julius — of old Bigin's — started a small restaurant in Washington Park, where his few Italian delicacies attracted lovers of good exotic foods. Successful, he opened a restaurant on Telegraph Hill, very near Laflers's former house, if my memory is faithful.

Julius, whom I visited now and then, carried on something of the Spirit of the Artists, without learning.

Julius' successors at the Castle — not a fortress but an eatery — can scarcely be expected to care for or understand the legacy of poets, painters and other artists of some 50 years ago.

Is it true that even the purely commercial restaurant, as it became, Julius Castle is closing?

Any way I shall end with Sterling's song to San Francisco's hilly streets:

"At the end of our streets is sunrise,  
At the end of our streets are spars,  
At the end of our streets is sunset,  
At the end of our streets are stars."







# Gobind Behari Lal / *Life in the Year 2000*



What's the shape of things to come?

In what kind of world will the babies born this year celebrate their 20th birthdays in 2000 A.D.?

A challenging answer is given in "The Global 2000 Report to the President," a U.S. Government publication.

It says:

"If present trends continue, the world in 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, less stable ecologically, and more vulnerable to disruption than the world we live in now."

Oil? About this fuel the report says:

"By 2000 nearly 1000 billion barrels of the world's total original petroleum resources of approximately 2000 billion barrels will have been consumed.

"Over just the 1975-2000 period, the world's remaining petroleum resources per capita can be expected to decline by at least 50 percent." And water?

"Over the same period world per capita water supplies will de-

cline by 35 percent because of greater population alone." Forests?

"By 2000, 40 percent of the forests still remaining in the less developed countries in 1978 will have been razed."

As for plants and animals, over more than two decades "15-20 percent of the earth's total species of plants and animals will have become extinct — a loss of at least 500,000 species."

The general mirror of 2000 A.D. will be darker, in the words of the report, because of greater "natural disaster and human causes."

War? "The world will be more vulnerable to the disruptive effects of war . . . The tensions that could lead to war will have multiplied."

Enough? There's lot more to make one feel gloomy as to the future — if we don't start doing some thing about the darkness on the horizon while there is still time.

Before the publication, this month, of the U.S. Global 2000 Report, the West German Government had issued a North-South Program for Survival, which recommended some political and economic initiatives to be taken by the nations of the world, with which I shall not be concerned here.

But one guiding idea of the German document deserves attention: the nations have to stop massive spending on arms, and increase spending on conservation of natural resources, development etc. . . .

Around \$450 billion a year is spent on arms compared to economic improvement outlay of about \$20 billion.

Will anything be done?

A commentator of these and other reports, writing in "Science," Luther J. Carter, says:

"A major international effort to cope with global conservation and development problems seems unlikely unless people in the United States and other countries of the North become convinced that their welfare depends on it."

But how are Americans and Northern-Western Europeans, industrially developed and affluent, going to be convinced of the oneness of world problems?

Nationalism is the strongest feeling in every country. It seems to be of two kinds: aggressive and defensive. Thinking and education, in the widest sense, of supranationalism or global humanism receives very slight recognition in any country or community.

Yet America started a new age, an age of "global history," at the end of World War II, approximately in 1945. This nation created atomic-nuclear energy, for peace and war. Nuclear science and technology have gone out to other civilizations.

A new historic sense, a kind of Earth Patriotism, seems a requirement for all nations. Nor is this attitude to deny nationalism. It has to grow out of nationalisms.

Isn't this the crucial problem? Philosophers of the new age of science and technology have to come forward, not just for one country but for all countries.

I look to America to develop such thinkers, educators, leaders, more than to any other country.

There must be pride and hope!







# SPY STORY

BY ELLIOTT E. PORTER



DEFENDANTS IN THE HINDU TRIAL IN SAN FRANCISCO OF 1917-1918

Left to right: Gobind Behari Lal, Godha Ram, Nidhan Singh, Bishnu Singh Hindi, Sundar Singh Ghallu  
Standing: Gopal Singh, Mahadeo Abaji Nandekar

Gobind Behari Lal died on April 1, 1982. Before his death, he completed his oral history for the Bancroft Library at the University of California. In it, he goes back to his childhood in India, his love of science and learning, and his career as a science writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He tells of his pride in sharing a Pulitzer Prize for science writing in 1937 (the subject was Einstein and relativity). In all of his interviews for the oral history, he consistently refused to speak of the World War I period of 1914-1918.

Interestingly, William Randolph Hearst Jr. in his introduction to the oral history specifically gives a distorted version of the events for those war years ... including a re-ordering of Lal's association with his grandmother Phoebe Hearst. He states that Lal simply "left the university and travelled in Europe for a year or two" ... quite a different scenario than the actual story. Mr. Hearst then goes on to detail Lal's distinguished service to the Hearst papers.

I have no idea whether this was a conscious cover-up or not. Maybe it is the story that Lal wanted for the

record. I have heard that he felt a great deal of loyalty to the Hearst family and did not want his wartime activities to possibly reflect poorly in some way on them. Before he died, I tried several times to meet with Mr. Lal and was always given the reply, "I do not speak of such things." In the course of the research for my book on the wider story of Indian nationalists, American, British, and German intelligence in this country before and during the First World War, I put together much of the story of those missing years in Gobind Behari Lal's life. I want to add that there

is much more wonderful detail on Lal's history in this period, more than I can easily go into now, such as the cultural life of the Indian students at Berkeley; what I have tried to summarize here is a basic outline of his surprising and exciting revolutionary adventures.

In the early spring of 1917 in Washington D.C. on April 5, President Wilson was rapidly preparing the United States for war; he ordered defensive sea areas established for important coastal points. Much of the rest of the world had already







been engaged in a bloody war for the past three years.

Elsewhere, at the offices of the Justice Department, orders were being sent all over the United States and its territories to pick up "enemy aliens." One such message was sent by Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren to San Francisco. At the large stone courthouse at Sixth and Mission which housed many federal offices in addition to the courts, John W. Preston, the United States Attorney, and James Holohan, the Federal Marshal received the coded telegram. They were instructed after the formal declaration of war to immediately arrest the entire diplomatic staff of the German Consulate along with a large group of Indian immigrants - a rather interesting combination, to say the least. Included in this message were special orders for the arrest of a student at the University of California at Berkeley, Gobind Behari Lal.

The next morning, Friday, the 6th of April, the United States formally declared war.

That weekend, in one surprise raid after another, swarms of marshals jumped out of their cars and arrested Indians and Germans around San Francisco. Gobind Behari Lal was arrested in Berkeley at the University.

**W**hy should an American attorney general specifically name an Indian student for arrest in the rush to war? To understand the answer to this question, one must go back five years earlier to August 1912 when Lal arrived from Delhi. He was greeted by his cousin, Har Dayal, an already well-known nationalist activist, who had come two years earlier to California. Lal built his social contacts and learned his revolutionary politics from Dayal. Dayal taught at both Stanford and UC Berkeley and freely circulated in the intellectual community of the time, which included Jack London. On top of this, he made the rounds of the immigrant population centers of the west coast.

Under Dayal's direction, a revolutionary party, Ghadar, was founded in December 1912 at the Hotel Shattuck (still functioning today in Berkeley). Ghadar was pan-Indian and became the focus of political organizing among Indian students at Berkeley and Stanford and also among Indian agricultural workers in Central California, Oregon, Washington state, and

British Columbia. When British agents (recruited from the Indian intelligence service) forced Har Dayal to flee this country in March 1914, Lal became an aide to Ram Chandra, Dayal's successor as full time leader of Ghadar.

With the onset of the war in 1914, Ghadar had actively begun to send guns, men, and revolutionary nationalist propaganda to India and to Indian enclaves around the world. In addition to substantial money from the Indian community, the German government heavily financed these activities through the consulate in San Francisco. They also directly supplied munitions. The most dramatic episode of this period was the departure in spring of 1915 from San Diego and Los Angeles of two

small ships loaded with weapons bound for Bengal. One ship was eventually confiscated in the Dutch East Indies and the other wound up beached on the coast of Washington state. Another high point was the successful, but short-lived, mutiny of the Indian garrison in Singapore. With more effective coordination, the Singapore mutiny could have been a very great disaster for the British.

Correspondingly in Europe, expatriate Indians (such as Har Dayal) were aiding the German army in attempting to win over Indian troops fighting on the front. The vast bulk of the "Imperial British troops" that were holding the line in Belgium in 1914, and around the Empire in general, were Indian. The potential loss of this manpower was a very real threat to the British Empire. (This whole story was to be repeated in World War II through the person of Subhas Chandra Bose. His Indian Legion fought as a unit of the German Army in France and its counterpart in Asia, the Indian National Army fought as part of the Japanese Army in Southeast Asia.)

The British were very much aware of the active role that the San Francisco Indians were playing in all of this. Early on

they had mobilized a special counter intelligence unit composed of both MI-5 and MI-6 in the United States devoted entirely to the "Hindu agitators."

On campus both at Stanford and Berkeley, there were faculty members who supported the Indian nationalists, such as Dayal and Lal, politically as well as culturally (although they were completely unaware of German involvement). Indian visual arts, music, and literature experienced a certain vogue. Dayal taught Sanskrit. Indian plays were produced at the Greek Theater in Berkeley and at the Mountain Players Theater on Mount Tamalpais. This circle eventually included the support of such liberal newspapers as Fremont Older's *The San Francisco Bulletin*. It should be noted that Phoebe Hearst, a patron and Trustee of the University of California was part of this scene, as was Walter Lippmann on the east coast. In fact in 1915, when Lal travelled to the east, he visited with Lippmann at *The New Republic*.

As a continuation of that trip, Gobind Behari Lal went on to England. There he met with politically active Indians and important English socialists, such as Graham Wallas.

**T**herefore, on a very straightforward basis, Lal was part of not only the local field work of the Ghadar Party, but also the equally important socializing with American and British political figures.

Both were equally threatening to the British government and they tried to do something about it. However, much to the chagrin of the British, efforts to make the American authorities decisively act against the Indians came to nothing (with the exception of forcing Har Dayal to leave the United States).

Until the United States declared war on Germany.

Then the arrest orders went out with gusto. Almost like marionettes, the Americans arrested everyone the British thought should be arrested. The British supplied the background reports, the evidence,

the witnesses, in short, everything that the Americans needed to press their cases and secure convictions. This material came from the same intelligence unit resident in

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**The vast bulk of the "Imperial British troops" that were holding the line in Belgium in 1914, and around the Empire in general, were Indian.**

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**Almost like marionettes, the Americans arrested everyone the British thought should be arrested. The British supplied the background reports, the evidence, the witnesses, in short, everything that the Americans needed to press their cases and secure convictions.**

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San Francisco since 1910. For them, seven years of work were paying off.

In what came to be known rather gothically as "German-Hindu conspiracy," one hundred Germans, Americans, and "Hindus" were named as defendants. Only 34, including Lal, were caught. Officially, Lal was charged with violation of the Neutrality Act, i.e., he had allegedly participated in a "conspiracy to set afoot a military expedition against an ally of the United States." Conspiracy was a legal device used to charge a large group without having to prove individual involvement in specific acts.

As with the other Indians who were arrested, Lal was able to make bail with help from his countrymen. Three months later on July 10th, he was arraigned and on August 14th, he pled not guilty. Finally, seven and a half months after his arrest, he was brought to trial. The trial lasted from November 20, 1917 to April 30, 1918, one of the longest in American history. In the index to the transcript of the trial, there are over 60 entries devoted to Lal. One the last day of the trial, Ram Chandra was assassinated by a fellow Indian, Ram Singh, which is another story.

The political intent of the American prosecution was to promote the image of the German threat. Newspaper headlines shouted the latest details of worldwide plots. Today, the testimony has something of the flavor of Keystone Kops mixed with Raiders of the Lost Ark.

On April 30, 1918, more than a year after his arrest, Lal was sentenced to one year in prison. He served his sentence at the Alameda County Jail in Oakland. Soon after his release, he got a job with the Hearst papers where he worked for the rest of his life.

For Gobind Behari Lal, who as a boy fed peacocks in the protected courtyards of Bikaner in India, and who believed in science as the salvation of all things, this must have been a harsh reality indeed. It is not difficult now to imagine the reasons why he never wanted to speak of this period. Not only did he come close to losing his right to stay in the United States (he was not yet a citizen), but also he might have lost his life. Deportation would have meant a second trial on his return to India. Sentences of death by hanging or life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands were more the rule than the exception for Indian nationalists. o

*Elliot E. Porter is a journalist and researcher based in Berkeley. This article is summarized from Hindoo, his upcoming book on Indian nationalists in the San Francisco Bay Area during World War I.*

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